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Chinese Immigrants to America: The Matic Dimensions

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CHINESE IMMIGRANTS TO AMERICA :
THEMATIC DIMENSIONS

A Thesis

Presented to

The Faculty of the American Studies Program

The College of William and Mary in Virginia

In Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree of

Master of Arts

by

Sui Wu

1990

APPROVAL SHEET

This thesis is submitted in partial fulfillment of
the requirements for the degree of
Master of Arts

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this thesis is to study the impact of traditional Chinese culture on the behavior of Chinese immigrants using an anthropological themal approach.

The anthropological themal approach to culture studies is used as a theoretical basis to study the influence of five basic Chinese cultural themes on the behavior of Chinese immigrants in the United States. The five cultural themes are--Reverence for authority, Women are inferior to men, The group is more important than individuals, Education is the key to personal improvement, and The fate of the state should be the concern of every common man. --- The study of these five themes helps to explain the following questions concerning the behavior of Chinese immigrants in general: Why are Chinese Americans a disciplined group? Why do they tend to obey their superiors with submission? Why do most Chinese American women accept their inferior position without much protest? Why are Chinese Americans bent on self-improvement with such intensity? Why do they keep such a strong interest in the development of China so many years after emigrating?

Conclusions are made that a themal approach allows significant insights into the relationship between Chinese culture and the behavior patterns of Chinese Americans, and that it is the combination of the five fundamental cultural themes that has made Chinese Americans a unique ethnic group in America.

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION.

Chinese Americans are an important ethnic group in the United States. Since their first migration in the nineteenth century, Chinese immigrants have made great contributions to this country. For over one and half centuries, they have persisted as a peculiar group that is characterized by their attachment to their own cultural heritage and by their unique behavior patterns. This thesis attempts an explanation of their behavior patterns by studying the impact of Chinese traditional culture on their behavior.

Statement of Problems

Serious academic research on Chinese Americans started in the 1960's, together with an interest in studying other Asian Americans. Since then, departments and programs in Asian American Studies have been set up in many American

universities. Books and articles have been published illustrating the history of Chinese immigrants and defining the group behavior of Chinese Americans. According to Asian American Studies--- An Annotated Bibliography, there had been 3,396 books and articles on Asian American studies up to 1987. About one third of them were on Chinese immigrant studies. (Hyung-chan Kim. 1989) Yet many of the publications on Chinese immigrants dealt only with the history of Chinese immigrants and merely described their behavior. Only a few of them have given an account of why Chinese Americans behaved as they did from a cultural perspective instead of how they have done so. Francis Hsu, the former Chairman of the American Anthropological Association and a professor of Anthropology of Northwestern University, was one of the few scholars who tried to compare Chinese culture and American culture and to illustrate the influence of Chinese culture on Chinese immigrants in America. However, even Francis Hsu did not explain in depth the relationship between the important behavior patterns of Chinese Americans and traditional Chinese culture. Even fewer scholars have managed to apply some of the important anthropological achievements in cultural theories' studies to research on Chinese Americans' behavior.

Given the above facts, the author has made a survey of some important theories about cultural values or cultural themes and human behavior formulated by famous twentieth

century anthropologists , such as Clyde Kluckhohn, Ruth Benedict, and Morris E. Opler and tried to apply these theories to the study of Chinese immigrants in America. The author has a special interest in Morris Opler's theory on cultural themes. Based mainly upon Opler's theory, the author manages to extract five Chinese traditional cultural themes. These themes are : Reverence for authority; Women are inferior to men; The group is more important than individuals; Education is the key to self improvement; and The fate of the state should be the concern of every common man. By studying the influence of these cultural themes on Chinese Americans' life, the author provides objective answers to the following questions that concern the behavior of Chinese American in general : Why are Chinese Americans such a disciplined group? Why do they obey their superiors with such submission? Why do many Chinese American women accept their inferior position without protest? Why do Chinese Americans have a strong attachment to their families? Why are they bent on self-improvement through education with such intensity? Why do they keep such a strong interest in the development of China so many years after emigrating to America?

The present study of the impact of traditional cultural themes on the behavior of Chinese Americans has been conducted with reference to and with the support of concrete examples from Chinese Americans' autobiographies, literature,

newspapers, and from interviews held with local Chinese Americans. These examples serve to illustrate how cultural themes have functioned as guiding as well as confining forces in the lives of Chinese Americans. These traditional cultural themes have exerted both positive and negative effects on Chinese Americans' life. While some of the cultural themes have helped to strengthen their group identity and to achieve success in their chosen fields, other themes have hindered Chinese Americans from achieving individuality. The examples in this part of the thesis are, virtually, stories of how Chinese Americans have followed these themes as well as revolted against them, the controlling forces of their behavior. Thanks to the "cultural theme" approach, the author has been able to find valid and objective reasons to explain the behavior pattern of Chinese Americans and argue on solid grounds that, behind behavior patterns, cultural themes loom large.

Organization of the Study

(1) Chapter 2, Related Studies, first reviews the history of Asian American Studies in America, then assesses the importance of anthropologist Francis Hsu' study of Chinese culture. This chapter also discusses the cultural theories which constitute the theoretical basis for the

present study. Clyde Kluckhohn's cultural configuration, Ruth Benedict's cultural dominant drive and Morris E.Opler's cultural themes were summarized and their significance assessed. Finally the author discusses some applications of Opler's theory by other scholars and justifies the usage of themal approach in the present study.

(2) Chapter 3, Thematic Dimensions, is the concrete application of Opler's theory on cultural themes. The five themes discussed, as has been revealed in the previous section, are: Reverence for authority; Women are inferior to men; The group is more important than individuals; Education is the key to self improvement; The fate of the state should be the concern of every common man. The extraction of these themes was based upon an in-depth study of Chinese culture as well as on interviews of Chinese Americans, on historical sources and literature, and on the anthropological studies of Francis Hsu. The author deals briefly with the political, psychological and social origins of these five themes in traditional Chinese society before his discussion of their impact on Chinese Americans.

(4) In the Conclusion, the author restates the significance of the study of human behavior with the help of the theory of cultural themes. The conclusion is made that the five cultural themes have made Chinese Americans a unique ethnic group in America and that Chinese Americans are a group

of great hope. Their spirit of hard work and endurance has added new dimensions to American spirit and their existence as an unique group has added, and will always add, the cultural pluralism which has proven valuable to American society.

Significance of the Study

To explore the life experiences of a people from the perspective of cultural values or themes can throw new light on the subject, because the use of themes allows a social researcher to observe clearly the interplay of themes and the manner in which these themes are affirmed. Thus a researcher can more effectively explain how ideology, character, customs and behavior fit together culturally. In exploring the "meaning" behind a practice, themal analysis also helps to illuminate the main guiding principles which dominate individuals and groups. The unique advantage of studying the life of Chinese Americans in the light of the theory of cultural themes is that it enables us to see Chinese Americans' life internally instead of externally.

The present study is intended as a proof and application of important anthropological theories on culture and behavior. The author believes that the study of Chinese American behavioral patterns based upon cultural values and themes can contribute in an effective way to the study of the behavioral patterns of other ethnic groups in America who came

from various East Asian cultural backgrounds. Korean Americans, Japanese Americans, Filipino Americans, Vietnamese Americans and Indian Americans can therefore be effectively studied.

Methodology

This section provides an overview of the ways the research on historic and thematic dimensions of Chinese immigrants in America was conducted. The combined techniques used for collecting the data are briefly discussed.

The collection of historical data was done with heavy reliance on previous historical works and journal articles. Over 20 historical works and journal articles were quoted and more than 40 books and articles were referred to. The information on the present nature of Chinese American life was supplemented by data gathered through interviews and informal discussions with individual Chinese Americans.

In order to gather as much information as possible on thematic studies, the following techniques were employed:

(i) Detailed analyses of the best-known Chinese Americans' autobiographies as case studies.

These are Jade Snow Wang's Fifth Chinese Daughter and Maxine Hong Kingston's Woman Warrior .

(ii) Interviews with local Chinese Americans of various

walks of life, especially those in Williamsburg and Newport News, Virginia. Over a dozen Chinese Americans were interviewed. Only the most typical cases were used.

- (iii) The Author's personal observations in his contacts with Chinese American families. The most important observations were those which he made while he worked in a Chinese restaurant in Williamsburg.
- (iv) Questionnaires the author asked some Chinese Americans to answer. The questions concerned the position of women in the family, children's attitude towards the father, and the individual's interest in the affairs in China.

The selection and utilization of data was based upon the need to best reveal the impact of Chinese cultural themes on the life of Chinese Americans.

Limitations of the Study

The present study is limited in the following ways:

- (i) Due to financial stringency, the author was not able to travel to larger Chinese communities, such as the Chinatowns in Washington D.C. and New York to make investigations, which would have enriched the present study.
- (ii) Chinese cultural values and themes are many. The

present study only extracts and deals with five of them, which the author considers of primary importance.

(iii) Chinese Americans' behavioral patterns are varied and complicated. There are a lot of common behaviors that are not discussed here. For instance, what is the cultural reason that lies behind Chinese Americans' disinterest in and reluctance to become involved in politics and political office-holding? And how can we explain culturally the constant gang conflicts that often occur in Chinatowns?

(iv) The study does not discuss other factors, such economic and political reasons, that contribute to Chinese Americans' behavior patterns.

CHAPTER II.

RELATED STUDIES.

The present study of Chinese American immigrants is based primarily on an anthropological approach, but the research for the study is based on the works of historians as well as anthropologists. Therefore a brief survey of the historical and anthropological studies of Asian Americans in general and Chinese Americans in particular should justify the need for an interdisciplinary approach to the present-day Chinese Americans, and particularly justify the use of themes in this particular thesis.

Before the 1960s. Asian Americans in general and Chinese Americans in particular were studied primarily by historians rather than anthropologists. Furthermore, to many historians of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, immigration from Asia was not an integral part of American civilization. This trend was largely due to the social

background and perspective of the historians. In 1968, John King Fairbank criticized the neglect of the history of Asian immigrants in America as "parochial", "myopic" and "ahistorical" (John King Fairbank 1969:861-79). He points out that American historians neglected that "America has interacted not only with Europe but also East Asia" (John King Fairbank 1969:861).

This trend began with the first professional American historians of the late nineteenth century. Influenced by Social Darwinism, a doctrine that reflected widespread racial ideology, they excluded blacks and other "inferior" races from their historical records. Taking pride in their Teutonic origins, these historians focused their attention primarily on

"their institutions and their Teutonic origin, with limited attention to the role of the general population in the nations' development. Immigrants, especially non-Western European peoples, were peripheral to their concerns" (Hyung- chan Kim 1989:34).

Perhaps the first historian in the late 19th century who contributed pages on Asian immigrants was Hubert Howe Bancroft. In his multi-volume work The History of California, he acknowledged the useful role of Asian immigrants, especially Chinese immigrants, as part of the labor force in the West. However, Bancroft was a historian full of racial prejudice. In his book, he regarded Asians as

aliens and denied their right to become citizens. The following statement typified American racial attitudes :

" We want the Asiatic for our low-grade work, and when it is finished we want him to go home and stay there until we want him again" (Hubert Howe Bancroft 1963:345).

In 1893 Frederick Jackson Turner put forth his frontier theory which had a great impact on the American mind. In his well-known paper, The Significance of the Frontier in American History, he emphasized that the United States should be studied as a part of Western civilization, not merely an extension of European culture. He pointed out that the American future lay in its people's continuous westward migration. This westward movement to the frontier gave Americans common experience and common identity, which constituted the basis of America as a " melting pot". According to Turner's thesis, differences among Americans would soon disappear and there was no need to study immigrants.

The impact of Turner's frontier theory was that it reenforced the trend to omit and neglect the Asian immigrant in the study of American history. Accordingly, historians like Edith Abbott declared that even if the study of immigration was worthwhile, " the study of European immigrants should not be complicated for students by confusing it with the very different problems of Chinese and Japanese immigrants" (Hyung-

chan Kim 1989:35).

Modern scientific studies of immigrants began in 1920s with Arthur M. Schlesinger, George Stephenson, Thomas Began, and Carl Wittke. A group of sociologists, who were labeled the " Chicago School", they criticized the traditional concept that there is little value in the study of immigration. By emphasizing the use of primary sources, such as letters, diaries, and church records and with the application of scientific methodology, they laid the foundation for serious studies of immigrations in America. However, Asian immigration still remained peripheral. Carl Wittke in his essay In the Treck of the Immigrants, said " The story of Oriental Immigration is a brief and strange interlude in the general account of the great migration to America."(Carl Wittke 1934:12)

However, studies of Asian immigration finally appeared. The important ones are Mary Coolidge's Chinese Immigration, Bruno Lasker's Filipino Immigration to the Continental United States and Hawaii, and Yamato Ichihashi's Japanese in the United States. By the middle of 20th century, the idea of America as a culturally pluralistic society became widely accepted. As an alternative concept to America as a cultural melting pot, social scientists began to use the idea of

cultural pluralism. They came to realize that America was composed of peoples of different backgrounds and heritages. It was these variations that made U.S. a great nation in the world. The fact that Asian immigrants have managed, through hard work and their traditional culture, to achieve socio-economic success also helped to change the bias of American social studies. " Thus the Pacific migration, formerly an "invisible" and inassimilable group, is now recognized for its exceptionalism." (Hyung-chan Kim 1989:27)

Since 1960, when Maldwyn Jones " incorporated the Pacific migration into the general context of American immigration without treating it as something separate or different," (Hyung-chan Kim 1989:27) great efforts have been made to study Asian immigrants. Asian immigrants' experience was studied from the following two perspectives: (1) Asian immigrants' major contribution to American society; (2) Asian immigrants' experience as victims in American society. Among those materials that deals with their contributions, the important works are S.W. King's Chinese in American life, Jack Chen's Chinese Experience in America, Shien-woo Kung's Chinese in American Life, Betty Lee Sung's Mountain of Gold, Bill Hosokawa's Nisei: The Quiet Americans, H. Brett Melendy's The Oriental Americans. Through these accounts one learns of Asian Americans' Nobel Prize winners, scientists, war heroes, and

artists. The representative works that deal with Asian immigrants' sad experience are Stanford Lyman's Asians in America, Roger Daniels' Asian America: Chinese and Japanese in the United States since 1850, and Concentration Camps, North America: Japanese in the United States and Canada since World War II.

In summary, the Asian immigrants were omitted and ignored by American historians due to their assumptions and to their racial prejudice. This trend was reinforced because of the Turnerian theory of America as a cultural melting pot. By the twentieth century, the idea of cultural pluralism prevailed in America. Because of this new idea and the success of Asians in this country, Asian immigrants have finally gained their due position in American historiography.

Anthropological and sociological studies of Chinese culture and Chinese American culture did not come into being in the United States until after the 1960s. Francis Hsu (1909-), an eminent anthropologist, made pioneering contributions in these fields. Born in China, Francis Hsu studied anthropology with Malinowski in England in 1930s. He came to the United States and taught anthropology in the late 1940s. Before he retired, he was the chairman of the American Anthropology Association and a professor at Northwestern

University. Since the 1960s, he has published a dozen books on the comparative study between Chinese culture and American culture and the study of Chinese Americans. In his well-known book Americans and Chinese---Reflections on Two Cultures and Their People, he compares and contrasts, with anthropological approaches, almost every aspect of the two cultures, including the history, politics, economic patterns, art and literature, family and marriage, the generation gap, hero worship, prejudice, and even drug addiction. For instance, Hsu observed the differences in child rearing between the two cultures:

" In no other country on earth is there so much attention paid to infancy as in China, and so much privilege accorded childhood as in the United States." " Americans are very verbal about their children's rights..., while in China, parents have had a completely free hand with their children."
(Francis Hsu 1972:85)

In respect to hero worship, Hsu makes the following observation:

" While Americans show their admiration for the hero with the hope of identifying themselves with the object of worship, Chinese revere and respect the hero for his exalted station, but few of them entertain the active hope of one day being in his place." (Francis Hsu 1972:163)

As for family relationships, Hsu makes such comments as:

" To the Chinese, a man's relationship with his parents is permanent. It is so central and so important that all other relationships are overshadowed by or subordinated to it. American relationships are

individually determined." (Francis Hsu 1972:138)

In his explanation of why China did not embark on the track of capitalism, even if there were a lot of favorable factors, Hsu traced the cultural reasons:

" The cultural pattern of mutual dependence is a far more comprehensive explanation of China's failure to industrialize. It was because of the emphasis on mutual dependence that the Chinese failed to pioneer in the frontier areas just as they refrained from emigration, and again it was this pattern that caused the Chinese either to be without capital resources or to use them for other than business adventures." (Francis Hsu 1972:297)

In his book on the two cultures, Francis Hsu made the following summary of Chinese culture in comparison with American culture:

" The Chinese and American ways of life may be reduced to two sets of contrasts. First, in the American way of life the emphasis is placed upon the predilections of the individual, a character we shall call individual-centered. This is in contrast to the emphasis the Chinese put upon an individual's appropriate place and behavior among his fellowmen, a characteristic we shall term situation-centered. The second fundamental contrast is the prominence of emotions in the American way of life as compared with the tendency of the Chinese to underplay all matters of the heart". (Francis Hsu 1972:10-11)

In addition to the study of Chinese culture in general, Hsu also did research on Chinese Americans' life. His study on the impact of both Chinese culture and American culture on Chinese Americans is best exemplified in his book The Challenge of the American Dream: Chinese in the United States. In the light of anthropology, Francis Hsu examined the influence of the traditional Chinese concept of clan and family, of

Confucianism and Christianity, of the concept of sex, of the sense of friendship, and of the business values of Chinese Americans. In his discussion of the Chinese family in America, Hsu notes three major traits. The first trait is the " elimination of the traditional Large Family ideal among all groups of Chinese in America." (Francis Hsu. 1971:30). The second trait is that marriage is no longer parentally arranged while parents are still consulted. " Parental consent is still very important, but parent no longer have the entire responsibility." (Francis Hsu. 1971:31) The third feature of the Chinese family is that the " ancestor-worship complex is greatly modified."

Between friendship and business, Francis Hsu comments that Chinese Americans have to make bifurcated adjustments because of the influence of the two cultures. American culture is business-oriented and emphasizes business relations among people. Chinese culture is one in which friendship takes precedence over business. " It requires that the individual do his best to fulfill his duties and obligations according to the former[friendship] relation at the expense of the latter[business] relation.' (Francis Hsu. 1971:77)

Towards the end of his book, Hsu deals with the subject of Chinese identity and the American Dream. Hsu observes that while contemporary Chinese Americans strive to achieve

success in American society, they should have a positive approach to their double identity, because, according to Hsu, " complete Americanization to the extent of total similarity with white Americans is impossible".(Francis Hsu. 1971:129) Hsu suggests that the effective way to deal with the double identity is not to deny it but to face it realistically. As to how to achieve a balance between the two identities, Hsu advises that they should maintain some of the essential characteristics as members of an ethnic group by learning Chinese and getting to know Chinese history and culture.

Francis Hsu's numerous studies of Chinese and Chinese Americans provided many useful generalizations and much valuable data for the author's study of Chinese Americans. But Francis Hsu did not use a themal approach to anthropological studies in his work on Chinese Americans. The present study of Chinese American immigrants is based upon a themal analytical approach, which is a well-established twentieth-century anthropological approach to the study of cultures. The major characteristic of the approach is to study a given culture and its impact on the behavior of the people by examining the working of the configurations, or the drives, or the forces, or the themes behind the culture. The major advantage of this approach has been summarized by Harold B Barclay, a professor of anthropology at University of Alberta, Canada.

" The themal approach may be viewed as a reshuffling of the data so as to look at them from a

fresh point of view. It allows one to bring data together so as to see the relevance of some important idea or principle as it cuts across various institutional segments of society." (Harold B. Barclay 1971:285)

The themal study of culture was originally pioneered by Clyde Kluckhohn, was strengthened and developed by Ruth Benedict, and was extended and clarified by Morris Opler. Although the exact term themes was not utilized until Morris Opler used it in his study of two Indian tribal cultures, the basic approach was already formulated by Clyde Kluckhohn in his study of Navajo culture from the perspective of culture configuration. The following brief account of cultural theories formulated by Clyde Kluckhohn, Ruth Benedict and Morris Opler traces the history and the development of anthropological usage of themes in cultural studies in order to show how their works influenced the present study.

Clyde Kluckhohn(1905-1960) was an eminent American anthropologist of the 20th century. He made a major contribution to social science in his works on Navajo ethnography and in his theoretical works on culture. He also wrote a lot on culture patterns and cultural values. His other contributions include pioneering research on the relationship between culture and personality, studies on linguistics, and

archeology.

As a pioneering anthropologist who endeavored to make anthropology a branch of science, Clyde Kluckhohn gave the most exhaustive definition to culture. In some of his brilliant papers on cultural patterns and cultural values, such as " Queer Customs"(1949), " The Concept of Culture"(1945), he gave the following definitions of culture:

" Culture is not, strictly speaking, the visible act, the speech, or the product of these things. It is a way of thinking, feeling, believing. It is the knowledge stored up(in memories of men, in books and objects) for future use---patterns for doing certain things in certain ways, not the doing of them. " (Clyde Kluckhohn 1962:25)

" Culture is one facet of human life. It is that part which is learned by people as the result of belonging to some particular group, and is that part of learned behavior which is shared with others. It is our social legacy, as contrasted with our organic heredity. It is the main factor which permits us to live together in a society, giving us ready-made solutions to our problems, helping us to predict the behavior of others, and permitting others to know what to expect of us." (Clyde Kluckhohn 1962:25)

" Culture ---as manifested in the concrete through culture surrogates---regulates our lives at every turn. From the moment we are born until we die there is constant conscious or unconscious pressure upon us to follow certain types of behavior that other men have created for us."(Clyde Kluckhohn 1962:31)

" By culture, we mean those historically created selective processes that channel men's reactions both to internal and to external stimuli."(Clyde Kluckhohn 1962:25)

Clyde Kluckhohn's important contribution to cultural theory is his study of "cultural configuration". By cultural configuration, Kluckhohn meant cultural values and cultural patterns which regulate the behavior of a group. He argued that cultural configuration is composed of two essential parts: the explicit part and the implicit part. Most of the time, "members of a society may be minimally aware " of their existence but are " nonetheless patterned to the same extent as the customs that are quite explicit." (Clyde Kluckhohn 1949:45)

According to Kluckhohn, there is no distinct demarcation line between the explicit part of the cultural configuration and its implicit part. However, he asserted that " explicit culture includes all those features of group designs for living that might be described to an outsider by participants in the culture"(Clyde Kluckhohn 1949:62).

" Explicit culture encompasses manifestations of " feeling" and "thought" and is in no sense restricted to objects and acts in the narrow behavioristic sense"(Clyde Kluckhohn 1949:62). By implicit culture, Kluckhohn meant that it is the "non-verbalized" part of a culture. " Participants---unless they are behavioral scientists--- are not aware of the very existence of these, and hence they do not impinge upon either the conscious or unconscious mental life of participants."

(Clyde Kluckhohn 1949:62)

Clyde Kluckhohn's theory on cultural configuration was not without its drawbacks. It was, however, a pioneering anthropological study on the impact of culture on human behavior. Kluckhohn's cultural configuration theory had a direct influence on Morris Edward Opler, a contemporary anthropologist who is well-known for his theory of cultural themes.

Ruth Benedict(1887-1948) was an anthropologist who continued the study of the " forces " behind cultures pioneered by Clyde Kluckhohn. Her works on culture have been praised as "positive" and "liberating for American anthropology"(Morris E.Opler 1948:108). Her "bold and imaginative studies of culture reflected themselves in her cross-reference to psychological, artistic, and philosophical theory."(Morris E.Opler 1948:108) In 1928, Ruth Benedict published her significant paper " Psychological Types in the Cultures of the Southwest". In this essay, she criticized the " culture trait-complex-area analysis", a popular approach to the study of culture in American anthropological fields at that time. In culture trait-complex-area analysis, a culture was to be dissected and " various far-flung sources" were to be traced. This approach made anthropologists isolate details and separate the history of the culture being studied, while

neglecting the patterns of the culture.

Based upon her studies of the culture of Pueblo Indians in North America, she observed that in each culture there exists a dominant drive. It is this dominant drive ---a mechanism--- that explain the integration of the culture. Benedict asserted that the formation of the drive takes a long time. " From a small tendency, a decided preference grows and finally assumes the proportions of a dominant drive, using such recurring situations as mating, death, and the food quest to express its nature. The cultural material, as it is shaped and integrated by the dominant drive, assumes a pattern and quality which is the ' ethos of the culture.'" (Morris E. Opler 1948:109) In her paper " Anthropology and the Abnormal", she explained how a dominant force evolves in a culture:

" Each culture is a more or less elaborate working-out of the potentialities of the segment it has chosen. In so far as a civilization is well integrated it will tend to carry farther and farther, according to its nature, its initial impulse toward a particular type of action, and from the point of view of any other culture those elaborations will include more and more extreme and aberrant traits." (Ruth Benedict 1959:262)

In another paper of hers, Benedict reiterates her argument that successful cultural integration is essentially the organization of the cultural whole in terms of a single idea:

" We have seen that any society selects some segment of the arc of the possible human behavior, and in so far as it achieves integration its institutions tend to further the expression of its selected segment and to inhibit opposite expressions." (Ruth Benedict 1959:201)

Benedict's major contribution to the study of culture theory was that she " provided some unitary principles to explain the dynamics and integration of cultures." (Morris E. Opler 1948:112) However, there is a drawback concerning her theory. She limited the factors that lie behind a culture to a single dominant drive, which excludes other important facets of a culture. As Opler indicated :

" By initially relating integration and harmony in society exclusively to those situations in which a single conviction rules activity and ideal, a normative and selective element was immediately introduced which placed the great majority of the cultures of the world outside of the pale of investigation by this method ". (Morris E. Opler 1948:112)

In the 1940s, Morris Edward Opler (1907-) made a breakthrough in the development of cultural theory by defining the " forces " behind cultures with an exact term, themes. An eminent professor of anthropology at Cornell University, Opler made in-depth studies of the life of the Chiricahua Indians and Jicarilla Indians of North America. In his studies, he discovered that there existed " a limited number of dynamic affirmations" (Morris E Opler 1945:198), which he called

themes, that dominate various aspects of the culture of the two Indian tribes and made their cultures unique. In 1945, Opler published his well-known article Themes As Dynamic Forces in Culture, in which he defined significance of themal analysis of cultures.

Opler asserts the usage of the term " theme" as the most accurate description of the spirit of a given culture and criticizes other terms such as " patterns" and " configurations" as overly broad in their implications. At the beginning of the article, he states :

" We have, of course, ways of referring to the uniqueness of the individual culture. We speak of the " flavor", the " feel," the "spirit," or "genius" of a particular way of life. We may ascribe its peculiar characteristics to the "pattern" into which its elements have fallen or to a "configuration" into which the behavior and thinking of its carriers fit. But this expressive vocabulary, though it has been useful and even at times illuminating, implies more than it actually reveals."(Morris E.Opler 1945:199)

Themes, on the other hand, declared by Opler, "can be identified in every culture and ... the key to the character, structure, and direction of the specific culture is to be sought in the nature, expression, and interrelationship of these themes."(Morris E.Opler 1948:198)

Unlike Clyde Kluckhohn, who restricts " cultural configuration" to mean " incentives to action of which the people concerned are not aware"(Morris E.Opler 1946:199),

Opler does not impose such a limitation on cultural themes.

According to Opler,

" The term "theme" is used here in a technical sense to denote a postulate or position, declared or implied, and usually controlling behavior or stimulating activity, which is tacitly approved or openly promoted in a society." (Morris E. Opler 1948:198)

When the people of a given culture act upon the themes, Opler states, they are in fact translating themes into their behavior or faith. Opler calls this process of "translation of a theme into conduct or belief" as the expression of the theme. He defines expression to be a term " by which is designated the activities, prohibition of activities, or references which result from the acceptance or affirmation of a theme in a society " (Morris E.Opler 1948:198) .

In a culture, explains Opler, there are always themes which are more significant than others. How could we tell which are the most basic themes in a given culture? Opler provides the criteria:

" In general, a theme which is expressed many times in a culture, especially in a variety of contexts, is likely to be more fundamental and to exert more influence than one which is expressed infrequently." (Morris E.Opler 1948:200)

Opler's theory of cultural themes was formed with an awareness of the "existence of basic human needs and the social structure" (Morris E.Opler 1949:323). Opler made it clear that the concept of themes was conceived of as a

postulate which arose from basic human needs and the social structure and in relation to them. In the first paragraph of the article, Themes As Dynamic Forces in Culture, he stated:

" A study of any society, nonliterate or modern, ordinarily divides into familiar categories, such as political organization, economy, social life, religion, art, etc. Yet, in spite of the universality of human needs which this suggests and the historical connections between peoples of which we are aware, each culture, in specific respects and in its totality, is different from every other, both in content and organization." (Morris E.Opler 1948:200)

Therefore instead of ignoring " fundamental human needs and primary, universal institutions", Opler emphasized that the introduction of themal analysis of cultures helps to "explain and interpret what is left untouched by a general conceptual framework---the patterning, associations, attitudes and rationalizations that accompany the activities basic to the maintenance and functioning of the human organisms and the society." (Morris E.Opler 1949:324). In short, the real value of the emphasis on cultural themes is that it reveals the nature of a culture " in a manner difficult to accomplish by any other device. ". (Morris E.Opler 1949:324)

From Opler's perspective, J.B. Watson, the behavioral scientist, made the following general statement about themes:

- (a) Every culture has multiple themes;
- (b) while there is necessarily some harmony among the themes of a given culture, there is no assumption of a complete lack of conflict;
- (c) each theme is likely to have multiple

expressions;

- (d) a theme may find its expressions in one or several parts of the institutional structure;
- (e) a theme in one culture can presumably be similar to that in another regardless of whether their expressions occur in all the parts of the institutional structure; and
- (f) themes may be part of implicit or explicit culture. (J.B.Watson 1964)

Cultural themal analysis has proven to be an effective device for various cultural studies. Many anthropologists have managed to explain the behavior patterns of the peoples of many cultures with the help of the themal approach. For instance, Harold B.Barclay made a study of the theme of equality in an Arab rural community. Using the themal approach, he identified several factors that caused inequality and determined under what circumstances equality may arise. (B. Barclay.1971:45) Vangala J. Ram studied Hindu culture and managed to explain the themes peculiar to that culture, such as The present life is transitory and inconsequential; One must perform one's duty according to one's station in life, regardless of consequences; and Non-killing is a primary obligation or 'Ahimsa Param Dharma'. (Vangala J. Ram. 1971:67) William A. Lessa did research on the practice of body divination in traditional China. He found that this practice was always associated with the appearance of the theme of individualism. His study reveals that whenever there was great

social mobility in Chinese history and the attenuation of the influence of Confucianism, the practice of body divination became popular. (William A. Lessa. 1971:234)

The themal approach of cultural studies is particularly appropriate to the case of the present study, because no scholar has tried to study Chinese American culture with an anthropological themal approach. With the help of the themal approach, the author has extracted five fundamental Chinese traditional themes. The selection of the five themes in Chinese culture was based partially on the information provided and research of Arab culture, Indian culture, and Southeastern Asian cultures done by other scholars. As Chinese culture shares some similar traits with those cultures, the author was able to make comparisons and contrasts in order to arrive at the themes which are most prominent in Chinese culture. Information and data revealed in Francis Hsu's works, such as his lengthy discussion of Chinese clans and families, have also influenced the choice of the basic themes discussed in the present study. In addition, the author's personal experience and education in the People's Republic of China constitute an important basis for the themal extraction. Lastly, the author's personal contact with Chinese Americans in the United States from 1988 to 1990 has helped him to confirm the working of the basic themes among Chinese Americans. By discussing the impact of these themes on Chinese

Americans, the present study presents the cultural uniqueness of Chinese Americans and explains the behavior patterns peculiar to them.

CHAPTER III.
THEMATIC DIMENSIONS.

Theme One. Reverence For Authority.

One of the major characteristics of traditional Chinese culture is its great emphasis on authority. Theoretically speaking, authority is a kind of social power, or cultural mechanism, which is essential to control individuals and to see that they behave according to the dictates of convention. In terms of imposing ethical and cultural codes, authority seems very effective in dealing with individuals and very powerful in maintaining a stabilized cultural environment.

Chinese culture, unlike its Western counterpart, does not emphasize individualism. Instead, it considers the individual per se as unimportant. What is important is whether or not every individual behaves according to norms that are derived from the Confucian heritage. In that culture, one is

not encouraged to seek personal gratification but is supposed to conform to certain cultural codes of ethics which, in turn, provide the individual with protection, or an ordered and meaningful existence . In Chinese culture, elaborate codes of hierarchy which respect age, subordinate women and forces the younger generation to obey the established rules of order are concrete examples of the workings of authorities.

In Chinese culture, authority mainly comes from history, tradition, ancestors, age, and father. From ancient times until the present day, Chinese rulers and elites have had the tendency to identify themselves with the historical past in their efforts to gain authority. For instance, almost all emperors of various dynasties in Chinese history proclaimed that they were the direct descendants of "Huang Di", the legendary founder of China. Local elites lost no chance to make far-fetched claims that a certain important historical figure was their ancestor just because they happened to share the same family name. The Chinese family is a microcosm of the Confucian universe with the father occupying the role in the family that the Emperor plays in the state. In Chinese families, convention dictates that the eldest male member, especially the father, has the supreme authority in the household. In a traditional family, authoritative codes not only gave parents the right to arrange marriages for the children but also formulated the duty and

obligations that children have towards their parents. Children should have absolute respect for their parents and elder male members of the clan. For instance, children address grandparents, parents, uncles, and aunts always with the address like " Nin " (you) which is the polite form of " Ni ". They do not call their elders by their first names. They are strictly instructed not to interrupt older people's conversations without their consent. When guests arrive, they are supposed not to be present unless asked to be.

Chinese children are supposed to support their parents and share their life's burden whenever possible. One is always encouraged to help his parents at an early age. When one's parents are ill, it is his or her unavoidable duty to attend until the parents are well. If either of the parents die, it is the children's responsibility to carry the dead parent to the home village to be buried(This was the usual case before 1949). In addition to that, to support parents physically is not enough. Confucius said:" Dogs and horses can also support their parents. What is there to differentiate human beings from such beasts if you do not respect you parents? " So the ideal children are those who show filial piety and absolute obedience to their parents' commands.

These long-established cultural codes created an atmosphere in which authority was revered and hierarchy was

accepted. The reverence for authority and acceptance of hierarchy in effect became " antidotes of any aggression on the part of the members of the society ". Just as Lucian Pye observes:

" A host of Chinese behavior characteristics -- ranging from their intense concern for form, ritual, and etiquette to their deep anxieties about social and situational ambiguity and uncertainty, their sensitivity to status issues, their acceptance of hierarchy, their dread of social confusion and political disorder, and their constant search for belonging, for identification groups,...-- all fit together in a common pattern and, in varying degrees, are related to the control of aggression.(Lucian Pye 1968:95)

Reverence for authority and acceptance of hierarchy formed the cultural foundation for the feudalistic system which endured in China for over two thousand years. It expanded its domain of influence when Chinese began immigrating abroad. When the Chinese immigrants first came to America, they brought with them this cultural tradition. The early nineteenth century Chinese immigrants who left their families back in China chose to establish associations. In these hierarchical organizations, authoritative powers were strictly enforced. Later immigrants who brought their families along never failed to preserve this tradition in their families.

How this traditional theme is kept alive in ordinary Chinese American families is best exemplified in Fifth Chinese

Daughter, an autobiography of Jade Snow Wang, a well-known Chinese writer who achieved fame in the 1970s. Fifth Chinese Daughter recounts the life experience of a Chinese American woman who grew up in San Francisco's Chinatown from the 1920's to 1940's. Underneath a story of a Chinese American woman, readers find an education in Chinese culture and values. One of the main themes of Fifth Chinese Daughter is the concept of Chinese cultural authority and the series of confrontations between Jade Snow and her parents over the question of parental authority and filial piety.

In her early childhood, Jade Snow Wang was brought up in a typical Chinese cultural atmosphere. Her first five years were spent in the entirely Chinese world of San Francisco Chinatown where "respect and order were key words." (Jade Snow Wang 1950:2) Jade Snow is so clearly conscious of parental authority and her place in the established family order that , throughout the book, she writes in the third person, never once referring to herself as "I" but rather as "small daughter Jade Snow". As she comments : " .. in spite of her parents' love, she must always be careful to do the proper thing. Failure to do so brought immediate and drastic punishment," (Jade Snow Wang 1950:3)

In the book there are a few examples that reflect the pervasiveness of parental control over her at early age. One

day, when she was three years old, she knocked off Older Brother's hat as she passed him on the stairs. The result was that " father whipped her with a bundle of tied cane;, then he withdrew permission for her to go with older sister to visit the city zoo." (Jade Snow Wang 1950:23) On another occasion, Jade Snow was spat upon by a neighbor's son. Her mother, instead of offering sympathy, reproved her, " saying that she must have spit on her playmate first or he would not have spit on her. She was told to bring a clothes hanger, and in front of all the other women in the garment factory, her mother spanked her." (Jade Snow Wang 1950:4)

As she grew up, the influence of the larger society outside the Chinatown began affecting her. She came to be in doubt about her Chinese education and her commitment to filial piety. In the fourth grade in American school, she was sent to a Chinese evening school by her parents. In this evening school, she found the principles which she expected in her own home were reinforced. " Order was demanded, any transgressors were punished with whip and public humiliation ". One day, Jade Snow was caught by the teacher passing a note. The teacher was about to punish her severely. Even to her own astonishment, she challenged the teacher by saying :

" Yes, I did pass a note and for that perhaps, I deserve to be stood out. But I am no more guilty than the girl who passed it to me, and even less at fault are we than the girl who started it. If you whip me, you should also have here all the girls from my row, with their palms outstretched. and I won't hold out my hand

until I see theirs held out also!...

So, you dare question me ?" the principal asked.

I speak only for what is right, and I will always question wrong in the way my Daddy has taught me. I am willing to bring him here to submit this matter to his judgement. Until then, I hold out no hand. (Jade Snow Wang 1950:64)

The principal knew that Jade Snow's father was a financial supporter of the school and had to let her off. This was the first time in her life that she dared to challenge authority. Ironically, she used one kind of authority to resist another. In other word, she invoked the concept of parental authority and filial piety to defy her principal's authority.

After graduating from high school, Jade Snow decided to go to college. This also created a problem in Jade Snow's relationship with her parents, because her parents, the products of traditional Chinese culture, thought that it was useless for a woman to receive a higher education. But Jade Snow insisted. Finally, she persuaded her parents, on the condition that no family assistance would be given to her during her study at college. Jade Snow worked her way through college by working part-time in Chinese restaurants.

Her college life gave her a new outlook. At college she learned that parents should not demand absolute obedience from their children but respect their inherent rights. This new

idea offered her the foundation to have an overt confrontation with her parents. One day, Jade Snow's parents found out that she was going out with a Chinese boy named Joe. They demanded that she not see that boy any more. To this Jade Snow replied:

" This is something you should think more about now. Yet, I am too old to whip. I am too old to be treated as a child. I can now think for myself, and you and Mom should not demand unquestioning obedience from me. You should understand me. There was a time in America when parents raised children to make them work, but now the foreigners regard them as individuals with rights of their own. I have worked too, but now I am an individual, besides being your fifth daughter.

her father ,enraged by what she said, argued:

What would happen to the order of this household if each of the four children started to behave like individuals? Would we have one peaceful moment if your personal desires came before your duty ? How could we maintain our self-respect if we, your parents, did not know where you were at night and with whom you were keeping company?

Jade Snow answered:

This is America, not China. Don't you think I have any judgement? How can you think I would go out with just any man? Both of you should understand that I am growing up to be a woman in a society greatly different from the one you know in China. You expect me to work my way through college--- which would not have been possible in China... Of course, independence is not safe. But safety is not the only consideration. You must give me the freedom to find some answers for myself. (Jade Snow Wang 1950:128-129)

Jade Snow Wang's experience reveals that for the children of Chinese immigrants, growing up involves painful efforts to challenge traditional authority. Although Jade Snow Wang managed to become a writer, her youthful experience of

learning how to assert her individual desires against the traditional system of authority revealed a hard fact: Many Chinese youths have to strive desperately to achieve personal autonomy. In contrast, for most American white youths on average, this process is not as painful as that experienced by their Chinese American counterparts.

Jade Snow Wang's experience revealed only the partial effects of the theme in general. As a matter of fact, reverence of authority has had a complicated influence on the behavior of Chinese Americans. The long-standing existence of the theme has made them develop a habit of respecting almost anything that has authoritative power, especially the laws. This constitutes an important reason why Chinese Americans are always a disciplined group with relatively low crime rates. However, excessive reverence of authority usually gives rise to a feeling of awe for authority, in which case submissive and weak characters might be produced. In fact, this theme has made Chinese an overly obedient group in America. For instance, in the early period of immigration, Chinese never vehemently asserted their basic right in the face of white authority. Instead of having an open confrontation with the unfair authoritative power of the white society, Chinese chose to retreat to Chinatown for refuge. In the late nineteenth century and the early twentieth century, many states on the West Coast passed laws prohibiting Chinese from marrying

white women. A lot of states in the South passed the laws keeping Chinese children from going to the public schools. Very few Chinese came forward to protest these unjust laws. Only two or three of them were recorded in the newspaper as having appealed to the courts and won their cases.

A Reverence for authority helps to create strong vertical relationships; every member is responsible to his or her superiors, rulers in society, and to the father or seniors in the family. Horizontal relationships between members of the same status are not greatly emphasized. The effect of the strong vertical relationship is the consolidation of the concept of family and family ties. This helps explain why so many Chinese are successful in running family enterprises, such as restaurants, laundries, and small hotels in America. Only a few of them are good at managing large companies. Although it is an undeniable fact that many Chinese Americans were forced into family enterprises by financial and educational limitations, most of them have found the family enterprise ideal because they can keep their cultural traditions, especially the authority concepts, alive in their own business world.

A study of " Peking Restaurant " at Williamsburg, Virginia will help to illustrate how a traditional cultural theme--- reverence for authority--- works in a Chinese restaurant in America. The Peking Restaurant is owned by a

family named Tiao, who immigrated from Taiwan several years ago. Mr.Tiao, who made the original investment of the restaurant in 1987, is in his late sixties. He has two sons. The elder son, Sam, 42, is the chef in the kitchen. The younger one, named Mark, 38, is the manager of the restaurant. The other family members are Mrs Tiao and two daughters-in-law and four grandchildren of Mr.Tiao. Mr Tiao firmly believes in traditional culture. He keeps the habit of worshipping the god of wealth. Every day before the restaurant opens, he is the first to arrive to observe the ritual of burning three incense sticks in front of the god. Although he does not speak English and is ignorant of many American business regulations, he insists that he be the decision-maker of the restaurant, in other word, the authoritative person in the family. As for every business matter, the two sons are supposed to consult Mr. Tiao. Every night after the restaurant closes, all the cash from sales must be sent to his house for him to check. When the author asked him why he still acts as the decision-maker instead of letting his sons run the business by themselves, Mr Tiao replied : " A family should have a head. The head of the family must have the final say in every important matter. I still feel healthy enough to hold the power. If I don't act as the head, there will be a lot of disagreements in the family. The family therefore can not function as one effective unit." ¹

¹ Interview with Mr Tiao Pi-san by the author.

It is true that Mr. Tiao's authority has helped to unite every member to work hard as one big family, which otherwise would be three distinct small families. Mr. Tiao's authoritative position is so powerful that he commands great respect from his children. Whenever he talks about his father, Mark, Mr. Tiao's younger son, is always filled with respect. He said : " Thanks to my father's right decisions, our business is doing better and better. Under my father's instruction, everybody in the family has to work hard. " Sam, the elder son, commented that his father is not only a successful decision-maker, but also the mediator of all family disputes. To his grandchildren, Mr Tiao seems to be a man with magic powers. One of his grandsons once said : " My grandpa is a great man. Whenever he is present in the restaurant, the business is very good. Whenever he is away from the restaurant, the business seems to go down a little bit. "

The story of Peking Restaurant illustrates how Chinese culture helps to promote the business of a Chinese restaurant and how family business helps to strengthen family ties in the traditional way. However, as more and more Chinese immigrants, especially of the second and third generations, merge into the larger American society, traditional Chinese culture does not have the same degree of influence as it had on the first generation. Born in America, later generations

of Chinese immigrants are more familiar with American culture than with Chinese culture. Sarah Young, a second generation Chinese immigrant , also a junior student at the College of William and Mary, told the author, " I don't believe in parental authority. At home, whenever I disagree with my parents, I just speak my idea straight forward. A lot of times I argued with my parents. This summer I had a quarrel with my parents. Acting on an impulse, I went to Alaska to get a summer job. Anyway," Sarah Young concluded , " the traditional culture has less and less binding force on the generation like me who grew up in America." ²

It is true, as Miss Sarah Young concluded, that Chinese traditional culture has less and less impact on the new generations of Chinese Americans. Rarely can you find any marriage that is parently arranged. However, so long as Chinese Americans cling to their cultural heritage and their racial identity, the effect of this theme on them can not totally disappear.

² Interview with Sarah Young by the author.

Theme Two Women are Inferior to Men .

For over two thousand years, Chinese society has been a patriarchal one. What are the characteristics of a patriarchal society? Gerda Lerner, a well-known American feminist historian, in her book, The Creation of Patriarchy, defines a patriarchal system to be

" the manifestation and institutionalization of male dominance over women and children in the family and the extension of male dominance over women in society in general." (Gerda Lerner 1986:4)

In a patriarchal society, Gerda Lerner explains that "women have been structured into society in such way that they are both subjects and agents". Gerda Lerner's definition and description exactly applies to the situation that traditional Chinese women found themselves in.

Until the early twentieth century, Chinese women have been assigned an inferior position. They were considered as expendable. They all had to practice footbinding. Many of them were forced to be concubines, or family slaves. Their humble position in society is best exemplified by the following proverbs : " A woman without talents is a woman of

virtue." " It is more profitable to raise geese than daughters." " Women are the roots of all evils". Confucius, the founder of the dominant feudalistic ideology, classified women with slaves and small humans (" Hsiao Ren"). He wrote, " The aim of female education is perfect submission, not cultivation and development of the mind " (Lucinda Pearl Boggs 1979:97) Confucius' followers emphasized even more explicitly the inferiority of women. Yang Chen, a Confucian scholar, had such words :

" If women are given work that requires contact with the outside, they will sow disorder and confusion throughout the Empire... The Book of Documents warns us against the hen who announces the dawn in place of the rooster... Women must not be allowed to participate in the affairs of the government." (Kriesteva 1964:75)

In order to confine women's behavior, Confucius' followers laid out many behavioral rules, among which the most notorious are the " Three Obediences " and " Four Virtues." According to the " Three Obediences," a Chinese woman was expected to obey her father at home, her husband after marriage, and her eldest son after the death of her husband. The " Four Virtues" required her to be a woman of chastity and obedience, reticence, pleasing manner, and domestic skills. These patriarchal codes, submissiveness, obedience, chastity and self-negation, have molded the stereotyped character of traditional Chinese women.

In the history of Chinese immigration to America, Chinese American women were victimized during the nineteenth century. The first women who came were forced to be prostitutes. Most of them were kidnapped from China and sold to San Francisco Chinatown. As Judy Yung described :

" During the Gold rush era, prostitution thrived in predominantly male California, and women from different parts of the world came for the trade. whereas the majority of white prostitutes came as independent professionals or worked in brothels for wages, Chinese prostitutes were almost always imported as indentured servants or "mui jai", sold by poor parents in China for \$70 to \$150 and then resold in America for \$350 to \$1000 or more." (Judy Yung 1986:18)

These young girls were treated as commodities and were often cruelly treated by their owners in the brothels. Many Chinese prostitutes committed suicide, became mad or suffered violent deaths.

In the late nineteenth-century, prostitution was on the decline. " According to the 1880 census, the number of Chinese prostitutes decreased while the number of women married to Chinese merchants, restaurant owners, cooks and laborers increased." (Milton Meltzer 1980:78) At the same time, a few Chinese merchants and workers were able to bring along their wives from China. Although they could not escape racial prejudice, these Chinese American women were in a sense less affected by Chinese social restraints. For instance, far away from their in-laws, they did not have to withstand the

unending complaints and scolds of their parents-in-laws. However, they still had to observe the tradition of footbinding and fulfilling the traditional roles assigned to them. In fact, those early housewives were confined at home the rest of their lives to serve their husbands and raise children.

The lives of Chinese American women has undergone drastic change since the early twentieth century. Under the influence of the women's suffrage movement in America and China's 1911 Republic Revolution, Chinese women in America were awakened. They began discarding the feudalist shackles, unbinding their feet and working outside the home. They were given a chance to receive an education and were encouraged to take part in social activities. As more and more women were able to get jobs, they began to acquire economic independence. Chinese American women's awareness of their role in the whole society made itself strongly felt during the World War II. In order to defeat Fascism, many Chinese American women boldly sent their husbands and sons to the battlefields in Europe and Asia. They donated a lot of money to China in support of the Chinese people's fight against the Japanese invaders. As observed by Judy Yung, the author of Chinese Women of America, " Many of them were willing to work overtime in factories and offices. Their work won respect from Americans." (Judy Yung. 1986:58) Since World War II, Chinese American women's social

status has improved a great deal. The old traditional themes that subjugated women have been severely criticized in Chinese communities. However, traditional concepts die hard. This old theme still finds its expressions in a variety of ways in many modern-day Chinese American communities and families and negatively affects the life of many Chinese American women.

Despite the changing role of Chinese American women in modern society, the old ideas, such as the wife should obey the husband, women should not have the final say in important family matters, and daughters are useless compared with sons, still cling on in many Chinese American families.

Betty Lee Sung, the author of Mountain of Gold---The Story of the Chinese in America recounts the following incident that she learnt during the 1960s, which reveals that for some Chinese American women, their inferior position in family did not change much at that time.

" I remember hearing one case concerning a wife who complained that her husband would not give her money to send to her aged father. The husband maintained that when a woman marries, her ties from her own family are severed and that her loyalties and obligations are entirely to her husband's family. The wife conceded that her father was not ill nor in dire need. She had two brothers to support the father. She merely wanted to send him some money as a token of her affection, and she felt she had an equal right to the family purse since she worked side by side with her husband in their laundry. The decision was made in favor of the husband. Chinese tradition maintains that a man is not financially obligated in any

way to his wife's folks."

Even today, in some Chinese American families, men's efforts to preserve the male dominant position and to belittle their wives' significance in important family matters can still be found. For instance, in the family of Mr. Tiao, the owner of Peking Restaurant, although women members like the two daughters-in-laws of Mr. Tiao help a lot in restaurant business working as accountant and cashier, they do not have the chance to put forth opinions with respect of business decisions. To make decisions for the business is the domain of men's world. The author remembers witnessing the following scene when he worked as a waiter in the restaurant in the summer of 1990. One day, when Sam's wife put forth her suggestions regarding the family's building another restaurant in Williamsburg, Sam immediately silenced her by saying:

"What do you women know about business. Shut up." Afterward, when his wife left for home, Sam told the author in a serious tone, "A man can only trust half of his woman's words. Don't you know this is something proverbial." He added, "In a family, a man should not be ordered about by his wife. It is him who should give orders in the family".

Some Chinese American men went out of their way to preserve their central and food-provider roles by not allowing their wives to work outside the home. Michael Hu, the manager

of Peking Restaurant, once told the author: " I would not let my wife work. I told her, ' You don't have to work. My salary can support our family. Your job is to take good care of our children and this family." ³ Michael Hu's effort is not untypical of many contemporary Chinese American men, who try hard to keep their traditional role unchallenged in the family.

Even in some professional Chinese American families, women do not have equal right to decide some family matters. For instance, Steve Dai, a student at the College of William and Mary , whose parents are from China and who are now working with NASA, told the author, " In my family, it is always my father who has the final say in such matters as when to go back China to visit grandparents, which college our kids should go to, and where to go for our summer vacation." ⁴

The above facts have shown that the lingering force of the cultural theme that women are inferior to men prevents many Chinese American women from achieving real equality in family life. In social life, it has been found that this theme has contributed to the working class women's plight in some

³ Interview with Michael Hu by the author in 1990.

⁴ Interview with Steve Dai in 1990.

Chinatowns. According to the investigations made by such scholars as Betty Lee Sung, Judy Yung, Shih-Shan Henry Tsai, and Jack Chen, many Chinese women of lower-income families work as sewing-machine operators in the garment industry. These women are " largely foreign-born and can not speak English well." (Shih-Shan Henry Tsai. 1986:158) Taking advantage of these facts and Chinese women's submissive and obedient character, most owners in the garment industry in Chinatown cruelly exploit women laborers. They " violate minimum wage laws, fail to pay unemployment insurance or overtime." (Shih-Shan Henry Tsai. 1986:159) Betty Lee Sung's aunt's experiences during the late 1960s best illustrate the hard situation many working class Chinese women found themselves in at that time:

Strung around the rims of San Francisco's and New York's Chinatowns are many sportswear garment factories utilizing the labor of Chinese seamstresses. There are also bead factories. The Chinese women gasp eagerly at these jobs, which pay by the piece or by the gross. An aunt of mine works in a skirt factory that pays her 20 cents for each completed skirt. I gasped when she told me the rate, but I felt better when she told me she could average six an hour.

Today, the garment industry of American's Chinatowns is still characterized by these chronic injustices done to Chinese American women. Shih-Shan Henry Tsai made the following observation about the status of Chinese American women in the garment industry of Chinatowns.

" In 1981 an estimated 146 garment shops or sweatshops

existed in San Francisco's twenty-block rectangular Chinatown; 99 were nonunion. These shops employed some 3500 women and produced about 50 percent of San Francisco's apparel. Most of the shops lacked adequate fire exits, toilet facilities, and ventilation. The apparel industry was seasonal and greatly influenced by fluctuations in fashion, and time restraints were often critical. Frequently owners, pressured by big garment cartels, overworked their laborers. Many Chinese women continued to work in their homes after the shops closed for the day". (Shih-Shan Henry Tsai.1986:159)

Working under these kinds of hard condition, the working class Chinese women have not shown any willingness to struggle to win better working condition through legal means, such as petitions or strikes. According to Shih-Shan Henry Tsai, these women " were reluctant to publicize their problems or attempt to solve them with outside assistance". Their reluctance to rebel and readiness to accept the present conditions reflect the impact of a culture which dictates that women accept their fate without protest because of their inferior status.

However, in confrontation with the existing forces that subjugate women, many intellectual Chinese American women have striven hard to rebel. How the traditional cultural theme---women are inferior to men--- affected the development of personality of a contemporary Chinese American woman and how she finally learnt to assert her own right is best described in Maxine Hong Kingston's semi-autobiographical novel, The Woman Warrior. Maxine Hong Kingston is a famous Chinese American woman writer. She grew up in Chinatown in San Francisco. Most of her writings deal with the life and

struggles of Chinese immigrants in America. The Woman Warrior won the National Book Award of 1986. It is a book characterized by imagination, anger and rebellion. The imagination relates to becoming a woman warrior. The anger is at the unfair nature of women's condition. The rebellion relates to becoming the opposite of what the prevailing culture forces women to be.

Maxine Hong remembers that her girlhood was greatly affected by her mother's ghost stories. These stories were carriers of the messages of traditional Chinese culture. Most of these messages were about the powerlessness of women in this male-dominated world. Together with other social customs concerning women's life, these stories imposed on Maxine Hong the concept of woman's condition, which dictated that women be submissive and loyal to men.

Most of her mother's stories were Chinese ghost stories. These stories were like a "cultural web" spinning around her as she grew up. This web imposed a cultural confinement upon her. For instance, when Maxine Hong started to menstruate, her mother told a ghost story of her "No-Name" aunt. In China, Maxine used to have an aunt. The aunt had an illegitimate pregnancy while her aunt's husband was working in America. On the day Maxine's aunt gave birth to a baby, the villagers stormed into her family house and destroyed

everything in the house to punish her adultery. The family considered the aunt a disgrace to the family and discarded her. The next day, the aunt killed herself and the new-born baby in the family's drinking well and became a ghost. After that, the family denied the existence of Maxine Hong's aunt.

During Maxine Hong's girlhood, her mother repeated this story again and again, the cultural significance of which was made clear by her mother's following remarks : " Now that you have started to menstruate, what happened to her could happen to you. Don't humiliate us. You wouldn't like to be forgotten as if you had never been born. The villagers are watchful." (Maxine Hong Kingston 1977:12) Behind this story, a more significant cultural message loomed large: a woman should accept her submissive and inferior position. If she rejects the culture, she will pay a costly price for that, because the culture will reject her and deny her existence. According to Maxine Hong, the denial of one's existence is perhaps the most cruel punishment of all.

" The real punishment was not the raid swiftly inflicted by the villagers, but the family's deliberately forgetting her. Her betrayal so maddened them, they saw to it that she would suffer forever, even after death. Always hungry, always needing, she would have to beg food from other ghosts, snatch and steal it from those whose living descendants give them gifts. " (Maxine Hong Kingston 1977:16)

In addition to stories, Maxine Hong describes the adult

behavior and folk arts in Chinatown that also help to legitimize the unfairness of women's condition. Girls are useless compared with boys is the theme of much talk among the villagers of Maxine Hong's community. For instance, the villagers are often heard to say : " Feeding girls is like feeding cowbirds." " There is no profit in raising girls. Better to raise geese than girls." (Maxine Hong Kingston 1977:46) Her uncle's bias against girls also contributed to her awareness of her sexual inferiority. One Saturday morning, Maxine Hong's uncle came to invite the children to go out. When the uncle heard that the girls wanted to go with him, he " turned on us [girls] and roared, ' No girls! ' " (Maxine Hong Kingston 1977:47) The folk songs of the Chinese community also intensified these cultural codes. One of the folk songs that Maxine Hong often heard is as follows:

" Marry a rooster, follow a rooster.
Marry a dog, follow a dog.
Married to a cudgel, married to a pestle.
Be faithful to it. follow it. " (Maxine Hong Kingston 1977:193)

The message contained in this folk song is very obvious. It in fact preaches to women the codes of submissiveness and acceptance.

As she grew up, Maxine Hong could not accept the unfairness to women inherent in that culture. During all her girlhood, she had always cherished the dream of becoming a woman warrior, like Fa Mu Lan, a heroine of one of her

mother's stories. With her sword, Fa Mu Lan avenges all the injustices done to women. In Maxine Hong's imagined world, she really becomes a famous woman general who leads troops to battle. In this imagined world, she , as a woman, does not have to obey men because she herself is leading the army of men soldiers.

Maxine Hong implies that this dream and her exposure to American culture at school contributed to her courage to rebel. With her excellent grades in school, she proved to herself that women were not born inferior to men. When her mother told her to be prepared to go to typing school, the typical school most Chinese Americans sent their daughters to, Maxine laughed at the idea and expressed resolutely that she would become a scientist or a mathematician. When some people asked her what she wanted to be, she answered " A lumberjack in Oregon." (Maxine Hong Kingston 1977:47) That was a role farthest from the female role according to the old tradition. In her rebellion, Maxine Hong refused to do the stereotyped work assigned to women. She said,

" Even now, unless I am happy, I burn the food when I cook. I do not feed people. I let the dirty dishes rot. I eat at other people's tables and won't invite them to mine, where the dishes are rotting." (Maxine Hong Kingston 1977:49)

Maxine Hong's resistance to the conventional women's condition is also symbolically exemplified by a strange scene

in her autobiography. She tortures another little girl in the bathroom after school, a passive little Chinese girl who never speaks. Maxine Hong " pulls her hair, twisted her nose and ears, pinches her cheeks in order to make her speak." This scene could be taken symbolically as her effort to struggle against the silent role of women in Chinatown.

At the end of the book, readers can sense her impatience of and anger at the traditional women's condition represented by the ghost stories .

" I had to leave home in order to see the world logically, logic the new way of seeing. I learned to think that mysteries are for explanation. I enjoy the simplicity. Concrete pours out of my mouth to cover the forests with freeways and sidewalks. Give me plastics, periodical tables. t.v. dinners with vegetables no more complex than peas mixed with diced carrots. Shine flood-light in dark corners : no ghosts." (Maxine Hong Kingston 1977:204)

The above examples reveal how the lingering force of a traditional theme of Chinese culture in Chinese communities affects the life of a contemporary Chinese woman.

Maxine Hong Kingston's effort to rebel against the traditional codes that subjugate women is typical of many contemporary women today. In fact, many contemporary Chinese American women have bravely broken away from traditional roles. They have even gained equality with men in career success. Today, many newspapers run by Chinese Americans in various metropolitan

cities often convey the success stories of Chinese American women. The story of Ms Lee Ai-si, which appeared in a Chinese newspaper Asian News published in Atlanta, Georgia, best exemplifies contemporary women's success at freeing themselves from traditional role and conventions.

Ms Lee Ai-si is now the owner of East West Real Estate Company in Atlanta. Eleven years ago, Lee came to America as the wife of a graduate student from Taiwan. Having graduated from a junior business college in Taiwan, she could not speak English well. At first, she believed that her goal was to become a submissive wife and a kind mother, the traditional role assigned to a woman. However, an unexpected thing happened in her life and changed her life completely. Five years after she came to America, her husband left her for another girl. This event was a heavy blow to her and almost extinguished all her hopes in life. However, she did not collapse. Despite frustrations and sufferings, she was determined to start her life in America anew. At first, she decided to work in the Loan Department of a bank in Atlanta. Four times she went to make an appointment to see the manager; four times she was rejected on the pretext that the manager was busy. But she was not to be disappointed. She insisted on seeing the manager a fifth time. After an appointment was arranged, the manager changed the appointment three times. But

nothing could stop her from working as an independent woman. Finally she was employed by the bank. After working in the bank for three months, she acquired great expertise in business. As a woman with great confidence, Ms Lee started a real estate business of her own. Six years after its establishment, her company had become one of the largest real estate companies in Atlanta. She is acclaimed as one of the most successful women in the Chinese community in Atlanta.

When asked by a reporter what her secret of success was, Ms Lee replied :

" Eleven years ago, when I first came to Atlanta, a friend asked me, " What do you want to be in the future?" I answered, " What can I be ? I only graduated from a junior business college in Taiwan. My English is so poor that I dare not to speak with Americans. I think I can only be a housewife at best." My friend's response was such that I can never forget in my whole life. She said, " If you have decided to live as a housewife, you will never be anything above, in other word, you can never grow out of the role." My friend's words taught me that if I do not aim high, I can never have great achievement. During my years of struggle, I have always set myself a high standard. Today, if a woman wants to succeed she must have the courage to think and to act. If she is bound by traditional convention, she can never succeed. A woman can prove her competency and gain a real equality with men only through her hard work and success." ⁵

In fact, the life stories of both Maxine Hong Kingston and Lee Ai-si represent the experiences of the most successful

⁵ Translated from Asian News July 4th, 1990 by the author. Asian News is a newspaper in Chinese published weekly by the Chinese Correspondence Association in Atlanta, Georgia.

career women among Chinese Americans. It is the will to break completely with old conventions, the hard working spirit and the insistence on education that have enable a group of Chinese American women make their way into the " high-paid labor market".(Shih-shan Henry Tsai 1986:160). Since the 1940s, the number of Chinese American women who received the PH.D., M.D., MA., MBA., and M.S. have been steadily increasing. People find more and more women doctors, physics scientists, chemists, biological researchers, computer programmers of Chinese descent. Among the most prominent personalities are Catherine Hsu, a famous doctor, Wu Jian-Xiong, a famous physics scientist, and Connie Chung, a well-known TV broadcaster.

However, the majority of Chinese American women are those who find themselves between the working class women of garment industry and the extremely successful business and professional women. The major characteristic of these women is their fairly good educational background. Statistics show that over half of them get an education beyond the high school level and many of them work in professional and technical positions. Have these women grown out of their traditional roles? To this question, the investigation done by Derald Sue and Barbara Kirk in 1970 provides an answer. According to Derald Sue and Barbara Kirk, even though a majority of present-day Chinese American women are well-educated, their

choice of profession was determined by three factors: (1) racial discrimination; (2) sexual discrimination; (3) Chinese cultural heritage. As for the impact of the Chinese cultural heritage in their choice of profession, Sue and Kirk found that " Of the 236 women investigated, the vast majority preferred a more structured environment, where there was less uncertainty and ambiguity, and fewer unpredictable situations. Chinese-American women favored such occupations such as housewife, teacher, stenographer-secretary, office clerk, dietitian, occupational therapist, nurse, dentist, laboratory technician, and engineer. Contemporary Chinese American women were still predominantly interested in domestic and domestic-related jobs.... Chinese women still appeared unsure about combining professional employment with family life." (Derald Sue and Barbara Kirk 1973:142-48)

Derald Sue and Barbara Kirk's investigation reveals that most Chinese American women today still identify themselves with a traditional role, although to much lesser degree than previous generations, when they choose professions. This tendency has made them " have higher educational aspirations and expectations than they do work aspirations" and made them "less competitive than other minorities. "(Shih-shan Henry Tsai 1986:161). However, this situation will change in time. As Shih-Shan Henry Tsai predicts, " As acculturation progresses, it seems likely that

Chinese American women will become socially less pliant and emotionally less docile." (Shih-Shan Henry Tsai. 1986:161) But facts have shown that the acculturation is a complicated process, in which Chinese American women are often torn between the impact of the American culture and the Chinese cultural heritage. While exposure to American culture makes them aware of their own potential and helps them to break away from an inferior position as well as a bondage, the lingering force of a powerful cultural theme that subjugates women has undermined, and can still undermine, the full development of personality for many Chinese American women.

Theme Three The Group is More Important Than the Individual.

In Chinese culture, individuals are constantly reminded of the importance of the group to which they belong. Individuals are encouraged to take into serious consideration the interests of state, community, clans, associations or families when they make important decisions. Usually if a person does something which contributes to the reputation of his community or family, he is hailed as a hero within that social circle. Likewise, if he humiliates his community or family, he is severely condemned or discarded by his group.

The reasons why Chinese culture attaches an importance to the function of group are as follows : first, the group, according to Chinese values, is a social unit, and also a responsible element in the political and cultural life of a society. It is often considered as a state in miniature. Second, the group is a very effective social circle where individuals can find protection. Third, the group is a social institution that strengthens traditional values and conventions. Once a custom is established in a group, the

custom persists for a long time. Fourth, The group is an effective surveyor and controller of individuals' behavior. By controlling the individual's behavior, it helps to stabilize the cultural entity and the cultural environment.

The four reasons stated above illustrate the fact that Chinese culture is of collective identity. They also explain why " the emphasis on the importance of group over individuals " is one of its cultural themes. This theme has exerted great impact on the Chinese immigrants' life in America. Concrete examples of this cultural influence are the establishment of clans and Hui Kuan among the early immigrants of the early nineteenth century. The early overseas Chinese clans were established on the basis of real or assumed kinship. At first they were organized by prominent merchants who were financially able to assume many duties and responsibilities. These merchants exercised leadership in their clans, and provided aid, advice, comfort and shelter to their kinsmen. The clan also worked as the guardian of traditions. For instance, it provided " boundaries of incest taboo and served to remind Chinese of their duties and obligations to village and families in China." (Stanford M Lyman 1977:56)

"Hui Kuan" was another kind of group organization among the early Chinese immigrants. " Hui Kuan was

functionally similar to but structurally different from the clans." (Stanford M Lyman 1977:56) "Hui Kuan" united all those who speak a common dialect. Wherever Chinese groups settled, their local "Hui Kuan" came to help. It provided loans and credits to individuals and also gave arbitration and mediation services to its members. Therefore it had a wide span of control over its members. Normally, every member of the "Hui Kuan" donated a lot of money to contribute to the "Hui Kuan" in return for its help.

During the Gold Rush days of the mid-nineteenth century, Chinese gold miners' strong sense of group and their readiness to work in teams enabled them to be most effective gold miners in California. Although they came later than other gold miners of European descent, Chinese gold miners profited a lot from their team work and the techniques they brought with them from China. Working in closely knit groups, Chinese gold miners never roamed for gold randomly as other gold diggers did. Instead, they worked patiently on those mines which had been abandoned by others. Normally, they built a dam on a stretch of river. Then, they drained the river with water wheels and bailing buckets. When the river was drained, they got the gold at the bottom. In this way, "they were able to find gold that earlier adventurers had missed ." (Milton Meltzer 1980:30) In fact, these groups of Chinese gold miners were so successful in getting gold that many other miners

volunteered to join them. The success of Chinese gold miners aroused jealousy among other miners, especially those of Irish and German descent. After driving out all Hispanic and French miners with mob violence, the miners of Irish and German origin (who were the main body of the gold miners) began attacking the Chinese. First, they made the government charge a heavy foreign miners' license tax on Chinese miners. Then they stormed the working sites of Chinese miners and stole all their gold. By the end of nineteenth century, almost all Chinese gold miners were driven out of the gold mines by violent attacks and discriminatory laws.

During the Civil War period, in the construction of the transcontinental railway, about 13,500 workers were employed by the Central Pacific Railroad Company. Working in well-organized groups, Chinese railroad workers defied the stereotype that Chinese could not build railroad because of their relatively small stature in relation to the white. In fact, they worked in the most dangerous and exhausting environments and made the work on the railroad progress at fast speed. A lot of Chinese laborers were employed to place explosives to clear mountain passages for the tracks. " Working in baskets that were suspended from cliffs, the [Chinese] laborers blasted away huge chunks of the Sierra Nevada." (David M. Brownstone. 1988:37) After the railroad was completed 1869, the president of the Central Pacific

Railroad Company, Leland Stanford, praised the effective work of the Chinese railroad workers:

" As a group, they are quiet, peaceable, patient, industrious, and economical. More prudent and economical, they are contented with less wages. We find them organized for mutual aid and assistance. Without them, it would be impossible to complete the western portion of this great national enterprise within the time required by the Act of Congress." (David M Brownstone 1988:67)

Although the reliability of the Chinese laborers as a group won them a good reputation among many employers, they encountered tough enemies in many white laborers. Chinese workers' willingness to accept the lowest wages incurred great anger from the unions in California. Just as Shien-woo Kung summed up :

" The fact that employers such as railroads, transportation companies, and landholders all used Chinese workers to their advantage made the antagonism of labor all the more persistent. To labor, the big corporations and Chinese labor were both evil." (Shien-woo Kung 1962:71)

As early as the 1850s, an anti-Chinese movement arose and was followed by large scale violence against Chinese all over the western coast of America. An editorial in an Arizona newspaper of 1882 reveals the strongest hatred for Chinese :

" The Chinese are the least desired immigrants who have ever sought the United States ... the Almond-eyed Mongolian with his pig-tail, his heathenism, his filthy habits, his thrift and careful accumulation of savings to be sent back to the flowery kingdom.

The most we can do is to insist that he is a heathen, a devourer of soup made from the fragrant juice of the rat, filthy, disagreeable, and undesirable generally, an

incumbrance that we do not know how to get rid of, but whose tribe we have determined shall not increase in this part of the world." (Duane A. Smith.1967:31)

As anti-Chinese sentiment became stronger and stronger, large-scale anti-Chinese violence occurred. " Newspapers often mentioned the murder of a Chinese; Seldom were the murderers hanged. In 1862, eighty-eight Chinese were reported to have been killed by the white hooligans." (Shien-woo Kung 1962:34) With the increased demands by laborers and politicians for the restriction of Chinese immigration, attacks on Chinese became more and more serious. " In many parts of California, houses of Chinese were destroyed. Those who employed Chinese often suffered injuries or even death." (Stanford M Lyman 1977:45) One of the worst anti-Chinese riots broke out at Rock Springs, Wyoming.

"In 1885. About 500 Chinese coal miners worked near the town. They were attacked by a mob of white laborers. 28 Chinese were killed, 15 were wounded. the remaining Chinese were driven out of the town... In 1887, Seattle forcibly deported hundreds of Chinese by ship, and Tacoma, Washington, banished 3000 Chinese on 24 hours' notice." (David M Brownstone 1988:47)

For decades, Chinese who had settled in the cities of Utah, Colorado, and Nevada were all expelled from these states. " Throughout the Rocky Mountain region and in dozens of California towns, the Chinese were burned out of their quarters, lynched, banished." (Milton Meltzer 1980:118) The

overwhelming discrimination and violence forced Chinese immigrants to gather together in settlements---Chinatowns. They settled and lived together in order to protect the whole group as well as the individuals.

Chinatowns served as refuges where the Chinese could survive the violence. Consequently, the sense of group was further strengthened among Chinese immigrants. Inside Chinatowns, they set up their own quasi governments and defended themselves with their secret societies from outside hostile forces. In order to avoid falling victim to racial violence, many Chinese immigrants lived their whole lives in Chinatown. Peter Wang, a Chinese orphan who came to America in 1921 to join his uncle recalled:

" As a child, I always felt I was Chinese, not an American.... My uncle would tell me whenever I went out, 'Don't go too far because the white people are against you. They may throw a rock or do something to hurt you.' I couldn't even get a haircut."

He also recalled how Chinese relied for their livelihood on their fellow countrymen and on other nonwhites. As Peter Wang explained :

" I was working in my uncle's grocery store and most of his trade was from the colored people, not from the white people. White people did not trade with Chinese.... In all my life, I always worked for the Chinese, never for the Americans. I worked in a laundry. I worked in a restaurant. I worked in a Chinese grocery store, things like that." (Perrin Linda 1980:45)

A common fate united nearly all the members of Chinatowns, and the life in Chinatowns also helped to consolidate a awareness of the group as Chinese and thus to enforce cultural traits. In Chinatowns, the immigrant " ate, slept, worked and played guided by his Chinese tastes and values." (Milton Meltzer. 1980:89)

The Chinese Exclusion Acts of the late nineteenth century were another factor which reinforced the organizational structure of the group among Chinese immigrants. In 1887, the U.S. Congress passed an Exclusion Act to prohibit Chinese immigrants from coming to America. The impact of the law was great: In 1881, more than 40,000 Chinese had immigrated to America; in 1887, only 10 gained entry. The Scott Act of 1888 denied reentry to Chinese who had gone home to China to marry or visit. This law also declared that Chinese immigrants were ineligible for citizenship. The result of this act was disastrous for many Chinese.

" It turned into scraps of worthless paper the certificates of return held by some 20,000 Chinese. It cruelly disintegrated whole families and shattered the hopes and plans of these thousands of immigrants." (Jack Chen 1980:156)

As few Chinese immigrants could go back home to marry, Chinatown became a bachelor society. Group organizations such as benevolent associations and secrete societies spread and expanded very rapidly. The young men in Chinatowns, who did not have families, considered the associations and secret societies as their home. The organizational structures such as

benevolent associations and secret societies strengthened the sense of group among the early Chinese immigrants.

By the mid-nineteenth century, some early Chinese immigrants developed the fishing trade off the California coast. Clustering in groups, those early fishermen formed their organizations as fishing villages which resembled those in China. Sailing out into the sea in fleets of small boats, they caught a variety of fish. Then they processed the fish and sold them either to Chinese communities in America or back to China. In 1854, a reporter visited a village settled by 150 Chinese fishermen on the south side of Rincon Point. He had the following report :

" They have 25 boats, some of which may be seen at all hours moving over the waters--- some going to, others returning from the fishing-grounds. The houses are placed in a line on each side of the one street of the village, and look neat and comfortable. Here and there, a group is seen making fishlines, and with their crude machines stacking in heaps the quantities of fish which, lying on all sides around, dry in the sun, and emit an ancient and fishlike odor. The fish which they catch consist of sturgeon, rates, and shark and large quantities of herring. The latter are dried whole, while the larger are cut into thin pieces. When they are sufficiently dry, they are packed in barrels, boxes or sacks, and sent into town to be disposed of to those of their countrymen who are going to the mines or are bound upon long voyages.... The average yield of their fishing a day was about 3,000 pounds, and they found ready sale for them." (Milton Meltzer 1980:41)

By the second half of the nineteenth century, Chinese American fishermen were seen fishing off the entire West Coast. However, towards the end of the 19th century, limitations and pressure

were placed upon Chinese fishermen. " Discriminatory laws and taxes together with violence made it harder and harder for the Chinese to make living on the sea." (Shih-shan Henry Tsai 1986:22) Most of them were denied fishing licenses, and they were absurdly forbidden to use Chinese style nets. Even their ships were barred from the Californian waters. As a result, most of the Chinese were driven out of the fishing industry by the end of nineteenth century.

Today, the age-old concept that the group should dominate the individual is still deep-rooted among many Chinese Americans. That no man, however great, is ever higher than his community is a widely accepted idea. When success and wealth come to the individual, his first thought is to share his success with those who are related to him-- parents, children, spouses, distant relatives, friends, neighbors and, by extension, the people of the whole district. The individual's glory is their glory, and he , in turn, is more satisfied because they have shared it with him. Francis L.K.Hsu in his book Americans and Chinese, had the following description of Chinese identification with the group:

" A successful man who does not return to objectify his accomplishments in his home community has not only failed to transform his success into a meaningful entity, but by forgetting his origin, he is undermining the very foundation of his position".

In the same book, Francis L.K.Hsu summarizes :

" The backbone of this situation-centered orientation

is the same pattern, that of mutual dependence which runs through all Chinese relationships. " (Francis Hsu 1970:163)

In fact, a careful reader of Jade Snow Wang's Fifth Chinese Daughter can easily detect the effect of this cultural theme on Jade Snow Wang, a contemporary Chinese American woman. Even though Jade Snow Wang defied her role as a woman in Chinese society, she could never forget that she is a member of her Chinese community. In a sense, she has never revolted against that group as a whole. Later in life, she achieved a lot of success. For instance, she won the Congressional prize for a study on absenteeism, she graduated with honors from a junior college and from Mills College, and she set up a business of her own. She never considered these successes merely as her own. Instead, she thought she had brought these successes to the Chinatown where she was brought up. Towards the end of The Fifth Chinese Daughter, there is a vignette which reveals the author's attempt to exonerate her "guilt" in violating the tenets of authority by her contribution to the collective identity of the family and the whole community. Jade Snow wrote :

" For Jade Snow, the moment of triumph had come. She had proved that Mama could raise her children to be a credit to the Wongs. She had shown her father and mother that, without a penny from them, she could balance her own budget and graduate from college, not in debt, but with \$100 of the original \$174 still in the bank.

But now, in her moment of triumph, she could find no sense of conquest, or superiority. There was an overwhelming flood of happiness and release, and the great comfort that a supreme achievement secretly brings,

but she could feel no resentment against the two who had no words of congratulation -- Daddy, who wanted so much to record a picture of her and her college president, and Mama, walking with tears of mingled joy and sadness in her eyes." (Jade Snow Wang 1950:181)

The strong sense of the group among Chinese Americans has, in the main, positively affected their lives. During the early years of immigration, it was this sense that united them to face courageously various kinds of prejudice and discrimination. For instance, when confronting anti-Chinese violence, many wealthy merchants in Chinatowns united with the working class Chinese Americans in their protests. At a time when violent attacks upon the Chinese in the West were most rampant, some elites in Chinatown of San Francisco appealed to the United States' courts for justice with the support of various classes of Chinese immigrants, although the appeal was not of great effect. The strong sense of the group helped them to sustain the virtues of caring for others and providing happiness for others in the group and laid the foundation for their spirit of selflessness and self-sacrifice. As the group protected Chinese Americans from hostility and provided them with warmth and friendliness, many Chinese Americans found spiritual support in the group. From the group, they came to realize the meaning of their hard toil and their strength as a member of the group.

More importantly, the theme---The group is more

important than individuals--- constitutes one of the reasons why Chinese usually have strong attachments to their family. It is widely held among Chinese that the individual should never shun his obligation and duties to his family no matter how far he travels. To many Chinese immigrants, the sense of family(a variation of the sense of the group) has been the backbone of their spiritual support. Betty Lee Sung describes the weight of the family in the heart of Chinese:

" To the Chinese mind, the word " family" has a much broader meaning than the American connotation of Poppa [sic], Mama, and children. Family was more of a kinship group or clan." (Betty Lee Sung. 1967:152)

It is their love for their family that made them consider their endless toils in restaurants, laundries, and farms meaningful. It is their hope of improving the economic future of their family that made them sacrifice their comforts, even happiness, with great readiness. L.C. Tsung's novel The Marginal Man, gives a vivid description of how this cultural theme gives meaning to the life of an old man who has toiled for forty years in a laundry in California to support his family in China :

The neon sign of a Chinese hand laundry reminded Charles of the several shirts he had not yet picked up. The sign said Wen Lee, but Charles had never been able to ascertain whether the proprietor's family name was Wen or Lee. He entered the shop and saw the old man still hard at work behind the counter, ironing under a naked electric bulb, although it was already ten o'clock at night....

"How many years have you been in the States?" Charles asked out of curiosity as he paid the man.

"Forty years", the old man answered in Cantonese, and

raised four fingers.... No expression showed on his face.

" Do you have a family?"

" Big family. A woman, many sons and grandsons. All back home in Tangshan."

" Have you ever gone back since you came out here?"

" No, I only send money, " replied the old man. From underneath the counter he brought out a photograph and showed it to Charles. In the center sat a white-haired old woman, surrounded by some fifteen or twenty men, women, and children of various ages... The whole clan, with contented expressions on their faces, were the offspring of this emaciated old man, who supported not only himself but all of them by his two shaking, bony hands. They seem to represent the flow of a great river of life, originating from a tiny stream. The stream may dry up some day, but the river flows on. The old man put on his glasses... and identified each person in the picture to Charles Lin. A toothless smile came to his expressionless face.

Charles Lin realized that this picture was the old man's only comfort and relaxation. He had toiled like a beast of burden for forty years to support a large family which was his aim of existence, the sole meaning of his life. The picture to him was like a diploma, a summa cum laude to an honor student. Behind the facade of sadness and resignation there was the inner satisfaction which made this old man's life bearable and meaningful. (L.C. Tsung 1963:158-159)

Theme Four Education is the Key To Self Improvement

Today Chinese Americans are marvelled at for their educational attainment in American society. According to a report prepared by the Population Reference Bureau, Inc, an organization with headquarters in Washington, D. C., Chinese Americans are more likely to graduate from high school and college than their white , black, or Hispanic counterparts. The surveys conducted by the magazine Phi Delta Kappan reveals that "

" While 89% of white 16- and 17-year-old attended high school in 1980, 96% of their Chinese American counterparts were enrolled... While 24% of whites between the ages of 20 to 24 were enrolled in institutions of higher education in 1980, 60% of Chinese Americans in this age group were similarly enrolled." ⁶

Chinese American children not only have a high rate of enrollment, but also exhibit " a great vigor and desire to learn" (Dennis A.Williams 1984:103). Most Chinese American youngsters " score around 520 out a possible 800 on the math section of the Scholastic Aptitude Test, 30 points higher than whites" (Anthony Ramirez 1986:148) Chinese Americans' performance at school brings new hope to some Americans who

⁶ Asian-American Lead the Way In Education Attainment, Phi Delta Kappan. p546. March 1986.

have despaired of America's low standards for its adolescents.

" 'They're bringing back standards to our schools,' exclaims an earnest middle-aged man from Westchester county, New York." (Robert B. Oxnam 1986:72)

Chinese Americans' excellent record has prompted studies to discover the reasons for their success. Some scientists, such as Harvard pediatrician T.Berry Brazelton, suggest that " Chinese babies are very alert, quiet and sensitive at birth...And they are genetically superior with higher I.Q." (Fox Butterfield 1987:88) Many other scientists discounted the genetical factor. Harold W. Stevenson, a psychologist at University of Michigan, said, " We didn't find any difference in I.Q. But if the differences are already appearing at age five in kindergarten, there must be something in the home." (Fox Butterfield 1987:88)

Professor Harold W. Stevenson was right. There does exist something in Chinese American homes that prompts their children to study so hard. It is their parent's cultural heritage--- the reverence for education." Just as Katherine Chen, a student at Stanford University observed,

" In the Chinese family, education is very important because parents see it as the way to achieve. With that environment, it's natural to study. My friends are that way too. It's not a chore. They know the benefits." (Fox Butterfield 1987:89)

Chinese Americans' reverence for education reveals the impact on them of a traditional Chinese cultural theme--- education

is the key to personal improvement. In fact, this cultural theme dates back thousands of years to Confucian ideology.

The original emphasis on education by Confucius was motivated by the desire to improve man's moral qualities. In the Analects , he illustrates how, by examples and teaching, education could bring out people's moral qualities, which finally would lead to harmony in society and the state. Confucius said,

" The noble man understands what is right; the inferior man understand what is profitable."

"The noble man makes demands on himself; the inferior man makes demands on others."

" The resolute scholar and humane person will under no circumstances seek life at the expense of his humanity; on occasion they will sacrifice their lives to preserve their humanity." (Confucius, Analects)

Confucius' doctrine " abolished the status distinctions of a feudal society and replaced them with a new classification by educational level because education was assumed to raise man to a higher moral status." (Franz Michael 1986:56) Confucius stated,

" By nature men are pretty much alike; it is learning and practice that set them apart." (Confucius Analects)

Since Confucius' time, emphasis on education and reverence for scholars were widely preached by Confucius' followers. By the Han Dynasty (206 B.C-A.D.221), a cultural tradition had thus been established that Chinese scholars were ranked first in social stratification. Following scholars were farmer,

merchants, and soldiers.

For over two thousand years, the tradition of emphasizing education became institutionalized in the bureaucracy of China where social mobility was based on education and knowledge, not on wealth. In all the dynasties since the Han, royal examinations were held each year to select officials from among the educated people of China. Those who were well-educated, no matter which class they came from, were chosen to be officials who " had the political and social power and prestige"(Franz Michael 1986:78). This political system reenforced the cultural code that education is the key for a person to improve his moral qualities and economic and social status.

The theme ---Education is the key to personal improvement --- repeated itself again and again in classical literature. In the Chuan Chi, short stories written from the Tang through Ming Dynasties, stories were told about how poor young men of peasant families studied hard, passed the royal examinations, became local officials and married beautiful girls.

Chinese Americans have obviously kept the cultural

tradition of deep respect for education in their life. Their efforts to encourage their children to get a good education is the best example of the importance of this theme. In the nineteenth century, due to racial discrimination and financial dilemmas, only a few wealthy Chinese immigrants were able to send their children to receive a good education in American schools. Most Chinese children could only go to the schools in Chinatowns, where they could learn basic English. In the early twentieth century, some American schools opened their doors to Chinese American children. Because of their traditional respect for learning, the newly-emerged middle class and lower middle-class in Chinatown were eager to send their children to schools or universities even at great cost and sacrifice. These people knew well that without a good education, their children would be bound to the same kind of back-breaking business, such as restaurants and laundries, as they had been. Without a good education, those immigrants realized, their children would be kept out of many occupations such as the civil service, teaching, medicine, and other professions. A son of a laundry owner in California remembers his parents saying to him,

" You had better study hard because you don't want to end up working in a laundry like us. Because it is a very bad form of labor." (Buck Wong.1980 :340)

Most of the second and third generations of Chinese immigrants did live up to their parents' expectations. They worked very

hard in schools and universities. They knew that as a minority group they could only make the society aware of their existence through their hard work. Many proved their potential and ability to succeed in scientific and engineering fields after their graduation.

Today Chinese Americans have an even keener awareness of the importance of an education in American society than their forbearers. Jay Yang, the home-fashion designer in New York, commented on the new immigrants' attachment to the importance to an education for their children.

" When they came to America, first they want the green card for themselves, then the green book bag for their children." (Robert B Oxnam 1986:72)

In fact, many Chinese American parents of today try hard to imbue into their children a strong sense of educational achievement. They teach their children that a good educational background can help them to transcend obstacles and secure a stable position in American society. Chinese American parents often give concrete help and instruction to their children, which, in time, creates a high motivation in their children. This is well illustrated by the observation of Micheal Tang, a student at the College of William and Mary. He told the author how his parents, who are second generation Chinese immigrants, had helped to inculcate this cultural theme in him and his brother.

" My parents are engineers working in Richmond. When I was in high school, my father used to say to us , " A

man without a proper education in a modern society could never establish his true entity." After he came home from work, my father used to spend one or two hours helping me and my brother. He made us to do a lot of exercises and taught the contents that our teacher had not taught yet. He bought us a personal computer and taught us BASIC and PASCAL. With his help, we began to lay a solid foundation in mathematics and computer knowledge. Soon we had built up our confidence in ourselves. My brother and I all had high GPAs. He is now studying at Georgia Tech as a graduate in engineering. Now I am majoring in computer science. I will try to go to graduate school after I finish at William and Mary."⁷

Nowadays, education does bring about great changes in the life of Chinese Americans. With a good educational background, they have more professional choices, higher salaries, better living conditions, and higher social status than their parents. Even those who came to American universities to study and have chosen to remain in America, have found they are amply rewarded by their education. The World Press, a Chinese language newspaper published in New York revealed the following statistics, which illustrates the changes in professional employment among Chinese Americans:

" In 1940, among all the Chinese Americans who were employed, only 2.4% of them were professionals. In 1950, professional Chinese Americans made up 6.3% of the employed population. In 1970, the ratio rose to 28.7%. Within 30 years, the total population has quintupled, while the number of professionals has increased 45 times more than it was originally in 1940." (Lu Xiu-lian 1990)

Among these professionals, many are engaged in university

⁷ Interview with Michael Tang. 1990.

teaching and advanced scientific research.

" Due to the influence of the Confucian tradition, many Chinese Americans consider teaching to be a respectable profession. For instance, In 1946, there were only 79 Chinese who worked as professors in American universities. In 1960, the figure rose to 1124. Today, this figure is still rising. The Nobel Prize winner Samuel C.C.Ting once said,' In American advanced scientific institutions, scientists of Chinese descent make up one fourth of the researchers.'" (Lu Xiu-lian 1990)

However, Chinese Americans' educational achievement and their subsequently easy access to American professional fields have not made them immune to racial prejudice and discrimination. Many of them have to face prejudice, very often in implicit forms, in their work place. They complain that "academic success is followed by occupational disappointment." (Robert B. Oxnam 1986 :72) It has been agreed by many Chinese American professionals that the higher the educational level a Chinese American enjoys, the stronger he feels the existence of prejudice based on race in his work environment. This can be seen by the fact that although many Chinese Americans find jobs in corporations or in civil service, only a few of them have a chance to be promoted to a senior management level. Dr Qian Cheng, a Chinese immigrant from Taiwan who works with NASA, told the author what he had experienced in his work place.

" I am a meteorologist at NASA. In my work unit there are only three persons who have received Ph.D Degrees in meteorology. I am one of them. The other two have been promoted to managerial level. But not me,

although I have been working here for more than six years and have more academic achievements. Here nobody would say " I don't like you because you are a Chinese." But sometimes I feel that in many things in our office I am an outsider. In America, discrimination is legally barred, but prejudice can operate in indirect ways. That is why I have always been thinking of starting my own business in computer software engineering. As a first generation immigrant, I feel that to be self-employed is the best way out. Because in American companies, you can only go so far. A limit is quietly set to your promotion." ⁸

The experience of another Chinese American engineer reported by the Magazine Fortune further revealed the frustration of Chinese American professionals because of the racial prejudice.

"David Lee is a China-born mechanical engineer. In 1969, he helped found Diablo systems, a major maker of computer printers in Silicon Valley. A few years later, Xerox Corp. bought Diablo, and Lee stayed on as a manager. He was stunned when a white boss was brought in over his head."

Lee decided to leave Diablo. Later he helped ITT organize another computer printer company.

"Under his leadership the company grew from \$143 million in sales to \$320 million in three years. ITT promoted Lee to be group executive vice president and asked him to move to headquarters in New York. But Lee rejected the assignment and soon afterward resigned. He

⁸ Interview with Dr. Chian Chen in 1989. In fact, Dr. Chian Chen resigned his work in NASA in October 1990. He now runs a computer software company in Newport News. His company has been writing business programs for Chinese restaurants in Virginia, Maryland, North Carolina, and New York.

says he was convinced that, despite his rapid rise, there was no room at the top of ITT for an Asian American. ' To have an Asian run ITT, that's just impossible,' he said. 'Therefore it wasn't worth it to uproot my family from California.' "(Anthony Ramirez 1986:148)

The above experience of Chinese Americans reveals that although educational achievement can lead many Chinese Americans to a better life and good careers, education unfortunately can not make them transcend completely large social problems, such as the racial prejudice in American society.

Chinese Americans' overwhelming emphasis on educational achievement in American schools has produced another effect---the speeding up of the Americanization of Chinese American youngsters. The Americanization of the children is the effect that many Chinese American parents are not fully prepared for, and many are ambivalent towards it. Maybe only a few Chinese American parents are aware that the education of their children in American schools is accelerating the process of acculturation. At school, they not only acquired knowledge but also accepted American culture, values, and customs. In time, to the surprise of Chinese American parents, especially those who are new immigrants, they find their children do not like to talk Chinese any more and behave and even think in American ways. These children have less and less interest in studying Chinese language and culture. To many parents who cherish a sense of Chinese cultural superiority, this is something hard

to accept. Sometimes they force their children to learn Chinese language in Sunday schools. But this does not always have the desired effects. Other parents who think acculturation inevitable realize that since Americanization is the inevitable result of their children's receiving a good education, they have to learn to adapt themselves to the Americanized behavior of their children. However, they still hope the process of acculturation will not be too quick for them to catch up with.

The acceptance of American values in schools have made many Chinese American youngsters become "BANANAS", Although they look Chinese, they have become totally Americanized. Often, these young Chinese Americans find themselves incompatible with a Chinese environment and not totally acceptable in white American circles. This fact has given rise to an identity crisis. Many of them question themselves, "Who am I ? " The poems of Diana Chang, a contemporary Chinese American poetess, exemplify the frustrations young Chinese American have for their identity.

" Sometimes I dream in Chinese
I dream my father's dream.

I wake, grow up
And someone else.

I am the thin edge I sit on.
I begin to say --- white and black and in between.
My hair is America.

..." (Second Nature)

" Are you Chinese?
Yes.

American?
Yes.

Really Chinese?
No...not quite.

Really American?
Well, actually, you see...
... " (Saying Yes)

The above analysis reveals that the emphasis on the importance of education is an old cultural theme in Chinese history. Chinese Americans have inherited this tradition and succeeded in their professional choices and in raising their social status. However, education is not a magic solution to all their problems. They have to face racial prejudice no matter what high professional achievements they have gained. Furthermore, education in American schools hastens acculturation, which often leads to new problems such as family disharmony and a crisis in identity.

Theme Five The Fate of The State Should Be The
Concern Of Every Common Man

In Chinese society, the love of country has been encouraged for the last several thousand years. Confucius, who praised patriotism, once said : " The fate of the state should be the concern of every common man." In the Chinese language, the word country consists of two characters. One is "Guo", which means "state". The other character is "Jia", which means "family". The phrase " Guojia" reflects that the Chinese know that the fate of individuals and families are closely associated with that of the country. If the country is thriving, families have the basis to thrive. If the country is threatened or disintegrated, its families are threatened. The concern and love for one's country has been an important theme in historical records and in literary works. In the famous historical records " Shi-chi"(Historical Records), compiled in 300 BC, historical figures who died for their country were recorded with great respect and were given high praise. Qu Yuan(ca 343-ca 277 BC), a well-known poet of the State of Chu during the Warring States Periods is commemorated today in China not only for his literary achievements but also for his great patriotism. A poet who had struggled all his life for

his state, Qu Yuan committed suicide in a river at the news that his state was defeated by powerful invaders. In a famous tragedy of the Southern Ming Dynasty, Peach Blossom Fan , a courtesan, who was a Ming partisan, was praised for committing suicide when the Ching (Manchu) Dynasty took the capital, Beijing, from the Ming Dynasty. In Chinese culture, a concern for the fate of one's country has become a cultural theme that has great influence not only on the people living in China but also on those who have migrated abroad.

When Chinese immigrants settled in America, they encountered racism. For nearly half a century, most of them were denied citizenship. Feeling that they had a limited future in this country, many Chinese retained a strong interest in and deep concern for the fate of China. In the late 19th century, when China was invaded by foreign powers, the Chinese immigrants in America were extremely concerned about the future of China. During that period, they showed their concern for the fate of China mainly through active involvement in the politics of China. Dr. Sun Yat-sen personified Chinese Americans' concern for the fate of China and their efforts to save China from the brink of destruction. Sun Yat-sen came to the United States for work and education in the late nineteenth century. Studying in the United States, he came to realize that the reason for China's weakness as a nation was the feudalistic system under the

Manchu Dynasty. He believed that China could never become a strong country unless it abolished the dynasty system and became a republic. Since 1890, he was bent on a struggle to free China from the feudalistic rule of the Manchu. In 1894, he organized the first successful revolutionary organization - Xingzhong Hui (Society to Revive China) in Honolulu. Xingzhong Hui's final aim was to overthrow the Manchu Dynasty and to establish a republic in China. Sun Yat-sen's effort won the wide support of Chinese Americans of various walks of life. From 1894 to 1911, when Sun successfully led the overthrow of the Manchu Dynasty, a lot of Chinese Americans went back to China and participated in the rebellion against the Manchu Dynasty. Even more of them sent donations to China.

The concern for the fate of China on the part of Chinese Americans was also reflected in their efforts to promote the course of education in China. The founding of the Republic in 1911 raised the hopes of Chinese Americans for a modern nation-state. Influenced by the idea, " develop education to save China," a lot of Chinese in America sent their hard-earned money back to help establish modern schools in China. They knew well that education was the basis of democratic political and economical development in a modern country. This had been proved by the experience of the advanced western nations. In order to modernize China,

universal modern education was the preliminary step. Guangdong Province, from where most early American Chinese came, received the largest donations for education from Chinese American.

" Nearly one hundred middle schools and elementary schools were set in 1930 with donations from American Chinese. According to a government bulletin of Taosan county, Guangdong province in 1931, 9 schools were set up in the county, which had 2,964 students and 180 teachers. (Renqiu Yu 1983:47)

In the mid-twentieth century, even though a lot of Chinese were able to merge into American society, most of them still kept their concern for the fate of China.

The impact of this cultural theme on Chinese Americans is exemplified in their efforts to help China resist the Japanese invasion during the World War II. In 1931 Japan demonstrated its intention to rule east Asia by invading the Northeastern part of China -- Manchuria. On July 7, 1937, Japan staged a large-scale invasion of China by engaging Chinese troops in battle at the Marco Polo bridge near Beijing. The Sino-Japanese War was officially declared at that time. For the next eight years Chinese suffered the horrors of war at the hands of brutal Japanese invaders who looted, raped and massacred civilians wherever they went.

" Chinese Americans were among the first to demand Chinese resistance against Japan and worked fervently for that cause in America. Throughout the war years, everyone, including women and children, rallied together behind China's war effort. The United China War Relief Association of America raised millions of dollars through

individual contributions and Rice Bowl parties,⁹ parades, and other cultural programs." (Judy Yung 1986:96)

Chinese Americans also participated in boycotts against Japanese products and protested exports to Japan. When General Tsai Ting-kai of the famed Nineteenth Route Army¹⁰ and other Chinese dignitaries came to visit America, Chinese American organizations gave them elaborate receptions to welcome them.

Today, although most Chinese Americans consider the United States as their native country, a lot of them still keep great interest in the development of both Taiwan and mainland China. Quite a number of Chinese American associations in San Francisco and New York work hard to help make the reunification of China possible. Madame Chen Xiang-mei, an adviser of foreign affairs for President Bush's administration and a member of the Minority Committee of the U.S. government, represents Chinese Americans' efforts to contribute to the possible peace talks between Taiwan and mainland China. She travels between Taiwan and mainland China a number of times each year, meeting the top leaders of both sides and helping exchange messages. The political and

⁹ Rice Bowl parties are collective efforts on the part of Chinese Americans to raise funds and collect supplies to send to China during the World War II.

¹⁰ General Tsai Ting-kai led his Nineteenth Route Army to wage a heroic resistance against Japanese large scale attack of Shanghai in 1939.

economic changes since 1979 in mainland China has always been the focus of interest to Chinese Americans. Before the Tiananmen Massacre of June 4, 1989, many Chinese American businessmen had made investments in China, hoping to boost its economic development. But the Tiananmen Massacre disrupted the dreams of a democratic China for many Chinese Americans. They were shocked and enraged by the brutal massacre of students and civilians by the Chinese leaders. According to U.S. media, thousands upon thousands of Chinese Americans in California, New York, Chicago and many other cities poured into the streets, protesting against the massacre. After the Tiananmen Massacre, the author interviewed Mr. Lui Yong, a leader of the Chinese American Association at Newport News, Virginia and a well-known preacher in a local Chinese American Christian Church. Mr. Lui Yong led a demonstration of Chinese Americans at Newport News after the massacre and prayed for the fate of China afterwards. When asked why he had such strong interest in China even though he was born in America, he made the following observation:

" For us Chinese Americans, most of whom were born in America, we have two motherlands. One is America where we were born and live as citizens. Another is China where our ancestors came from. Our double identity --- Chinese Americans-- makes us to have concerns for the fate of both America and China. Brought up in America, we know it is our duty to love this country and make contributions to it. On the other hand, our ethnic identity makes us to have an interest in China. Confucius said " The fate of a state is the concern of every common man". In our hearts we still feel that we are those "common men". So long as we are labeled Chinese Americans, not totally Americans,

we will be always concerned for the fate of China." ¹¹

Mr. Lui Yong's remarks clearly illustrate the impact of a Chinese cultural theme on contemporary Chinese Americans.

¹¹ Interview with Mr. Lui Yong in 1989.

CHAPTER IV.

CONCLUSION.

Having isolated and defined five prominent cultural themes that exist among Chinese Americans and discussed their impact on the behavior of Chinese Americans, the questions that must be answered are: How reliable are the themes as adequate representations of Chinese culture? In what way does the themal approach constitute an advance over other methods? The answer of the first question lies in the explanation of the methodology. First, it is understood that the themal approach requires the extraction of themes from a culture. The ability to extract themes presupposes a very extensive, intimate knowledge of the culture being analyzed. Because the author comes from the People's Republic of China, his education in China has given him the concrete and intimate knowledge of the core of the culture there. But most importantly, the author familiarized himself with the basic constituents of Chinese cultural themes through his studies of the important ideas and values of Chinese culture.

The second question whether the themal approach represents an advance over other methodologies for the study

of Chinese American culture can be answered by a close reading of this thesis, which, it is hoped, has revealed the following advantages. First it is essentially a way of reorganizing data by reducing a substantial amount of material to a few principles, and relating that material to the themes. The second advantage is that the themal approach allows us to study behavior as "an empirical manifestation of the cultural themes that lay behind." (Mario D. Zamora. 1971 : 219) The third advantage is that it enables us to view human behavior with greater objectivity, minimizing the subjective judgement. The fourth advantage is that it provides a way to establish criteria that are internal to the culture in question. The fifth advantage, as Professor Mario D. Zamora stated in his book Themes in Culture, is " The mentalistic character of themal analysis [which] involves logical and affective dimensions ; as a consequence, the emotional significance of a theme to its carriers and its internal logical ordering constitute means whereby significance may be assessed." (Mario D Zamora 1971:224)

The cultural themal approach is an effective methodology for studying cultures, and especially for the exploration of the complex behavior patterns of human groups. With an understanding of the relationship between cultural themes and behavior patterns of a group, it is easy to observe that the changes in a group's behavior depend much on the

degree with which the group identifies itself with its cultural themes. In fact, this approach is also of practical significance. For instance, for a group to change a certain behavior pattern, it is possible for such change to occur only when the members of the group are aware of the negative aspects of certain themes and see the necessity to react against them. Chinese American women started to rebel against the " Three Obediences" and " Four Virtues" only when they saw the absurdity of the theme --- Women are inferior to men. Chinese Americans will continue work hard and achieve greater success only if they preserve the theme --- Education is the key to self improvement.

Finally, the use of the themal approach for the study of Chinese Americans can perhaps provide a model for the study of other East and Southeast Asian immigrants in America.

Based on this study of Chinese Americans's behavior patterns, the author concludes this thesis by adding the following points:

The five basic themes may not be unique to Chinese Americans only. Other ethnic groups may share some of the basic themes in their own culture. However, it is the combination of the five basic themes that have made Chinese Americans unique as an ethnic group in America. In fact, Chinese Americans are an ethnic group of great hope. Despite

the setbacks inherent in some of their behavior patterns, they have always been law-abiding, hard-working people. In fact, evidence presented in the thesis indicates that they are making great efforts to free themselves from some of the negative impact that traditional cultural themes have had on them. They are a group of people who are always ready to shoulder their obligations, and if necessary, even to make sacrifices. They have proven to be great contributors to American society. After so many years of troubles and hardships, Chinese Americans have never given up. They have silently persisted and have survived prejudice, discrimination, violence, expulsion and poverty. With their hard struggle, they have emerged as a model minority in America with the highest average education level. Their spirit of endurance and hard work have added a new dimension to the American spirit and become an inseparable part of American culture.

APPENDIX A

BIOGRAPHIES OF RELATED WRITERS.

Hsu, Francis L.K. 1909-

anthropologist and professor. Hsu was born in Chuang-ho, China on October 28, 1909. He received his B.A. degree from University of Shanghai in 1933 and his Ph.D. from University of London in 1940. He was a professor and the chairman of the department of anthropology in Northwestern University before he retired in 1970 and the chairman of the American Anthropology Association from 1978 to 1979. His important works include : Under the Ancestor's Shadow, Americans and Chinese, Aspects of culture and Personality.

Kingston, Maxine Hong 1940-

writer. Kingston was born in Stockton, California, on October 27, 1940. Her parents bought a laundry business in Stockton after they immigrated to the United States in the 1930s. She went to the University of California at Berkeley where she received a degree in English. Kingston later took an advanced degree in education and began to teach in Hawaii in 1967. She married Earll Kingston on November 23, 1962, thus acquiring the surname Kingston. Kingston's best known works are : The Woman Warrior and China Men.

Kluckhohn, Clyde. 1905-1960.

anthropologist. Kluckhohn was born in Le Mars, Iowa on January 11, 1905. He was a professor of anthropology at Harvard University. He contributed to anthropology in a number of ways: by his ethnographic studies of the Navajo; by his theory of culture, partial value systems, and cultural patterns; by his intellectual leadership; and by his representation of anthropology in government circles. Kluckhohn received his B.A. from the University of Wisconsin in 1920 and received his Ph.D at Harvard in 1936. Among his studies of Navajo are Navajo Classification of their Song Ceremonials and Introduction to Navaho Chant Practice. Kluckhohn's basic idea about culture are contained in Mirror of Man, which won the McGraw-Hill prize for the best popular work in science. Kluckhohn died on July 29, 1960 at Santa Fe, N.M.

Opler, Morris E. 1907-

anthropologist and professor. Opler was born in Buffalo, New York on May 16, 1907. He received his B.A in sociology from the University of Buffalo in 1929 and his Ph.D. in anthropology from the University of Chicago in 1933. Before he retired from the Department of anthropology of Cornell University, he was the director of the University's South Asia Program and the vice chairman of the Department of Anthropology at Cornell University. His major contribution to anthropology is his study of Chiricahua and Jicarilla Indian tribes cultures and his theory of cultural themes.

Wang, Jade Snow 1922-

writer and business woman. Wang was born in San Francisco, California on January 21, 1922. She went to Mills College where she received her B.A. degree. She married Woodrow Ong on August 29, 1950 and has two children. Her important works are : Fifth Chinese Daughter, The Immigration Experience, and No Chinese Stranger.

APPENDIX B

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